UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE
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MARY OF AGREDA IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN FAVORED WITH THE MIRACLE OF BILOCATION: ALWAYS REMAINING IN HER CONVENT AT AGREDA, SHE WAS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS THE FIRST MESSENGER OF THE TRUE FAITH SENT BY GOD TO THE INDIANS IN ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO, U. S.

CITY OF GOD

THE CONCEPTION

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE
OF THE
VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

MANIFESTED TO MARY OF AGREDA
FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MEN

Translated from the Original Spanish
BY
FISCAR MARISON
(Rev. Geo. J. Blatter)



FIRST COMPLETE EDITION

ADDRESS
THE THEOPOLITAN
SO. CHICAGO, ILL.

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY
HAMMOND, INDIANA

IMPRIMATUR

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:—

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English translation of the work entitled "Ciudad de Dios." Wishing you every blessing, I remain

Devotedly in Domino,

H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.



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REV. GEO. J. BLATTER

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MYSTICAL

CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE
AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE
THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY
EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE
AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town
of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under
obedience to the regular observance
of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing
of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.



Translation from the Original Authorized Spanish Edition

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902

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SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

REVELATIONS

NOTHING that essentially differs from the teachings of the Catholic Church can rightfully be taught or believed by any man or under any pretext. Moreover, even the essential doctrines can be taught and expounded only in the sense and spirit approved, or at least not disapproved, by the Church. This at once will establish the position which private revelations, whether coming from Heaven or originating from hallucination, merely human or devilish, hold in the Church of God.

There can be no doubt that God can and does manifest to chosen souls hidden things in addition to what He teaches through the public ministry of His Church. It is also an accepted truth that He sometimes reveals them to his friends for the express purpose of communicating this extra knowledge to other well disposed persons through the natural and human means at the disposal of those receiving his revelations. These manifestations He invariably surrounds with enough evidence to satisfy all requirements of a cautious and well founded human belief. It follows naturally that whenever He thus surrounds private revelations with evidences of their heavenly origin, He will be pleased with a rational and loving belief and dissatisfied with a captious and obstinate unbelief of the facts or truths thus privately revealed. Where, however, these external evidences are wanting,

or wherever holy Church intimates the least direct or indirect disapproval, there any faith in private revelation would be not only foolish, but positively wrong.

FULL APPROVAL

The Church has as yet given no public and full approval to private revelations of any kind; nor will she ever do so, since that would be really an addition to the deposit of faith left by Christ. But tacitly and indirectly she has approved many private revelations, and among them the writings of Mary of Agreda. She could well do so, since there are no writings of that kind which exhibit more reliable human proofs of divine origin than the "Ciudad de Dios" of the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

The existence of the Bible justifies the query, whether there are not other books that have been written under supernatural guidance, though we know of course that none of them can ever have the same importance and authenticity as the Bible. For the Bible was provided as the record of the general revelations of God to mankind at all its stages to the end of times.

A VAST FIELD BETWEEN

Evidently there remains an immense domain of truths outside the range of natural human knowledge and not specially revealed in the Bible. You will at once say: that whole field is covered by the one true religion. Of course it is. The teaching and ministry of men especially appointed for that purpose, the practice and example of those eminent in the christian virtues, the writings of those versed in higher truths, are the ordinary means of spreading truth and leading men to their great

destiny. But besides all this, history proves that God, for special purposes, often grants to his friends higher insight into supernatural truths and facts, which, if at his command they are recorded in writing, are intended by Him as an additional source of higher knowledge and well deserve to be considered as private revelations.

EARMARKS OF DECEIT

Past ages simply teem with writings that claim to be derived from or based on divine revelation or inspiration. Many of them are clearly nothing but frauds, showing the signs of conscious or unconscious hallucination. Many again seem beyond mere natural human powers of insight, but at the same time in their authorship and tendencies show nothing divine or beneficent, thus proving that besides human error and malice the sinister and treacherous knowledge of malign spirits often finds its way into such writings. Ancient sorcery and magic and modern spiritism have their root in this sort of preternatural communication.

TO BE CLOSELY SCRUTINIZED

Hence it would be foolish not to demand the closest inquiry into anything put forward as private revelation. Fortunately it is easy to apply sure and unfailing tests. All that is necessary, is to ascertain the character and motives of the writer and the result or drift of his writings. Mahomet proves himself an epileptic adventurer and his Koran a travesty of Judaism and Christianity, settling like a blight upon civilization. Joseph Smith and his companions turn out to be rebellious incendiaries and murderers and their book of Mormon a ridiculous fake, establishing a fanatic and bigamous theocracy.

The fakir Dowie pretending prophecy, ends as a lunatic in a bankrupt Zion, yet leaving millions to his relatives. The humbugging Eddy, after crazy-quilting scraps from the Bible with shreds of Buddhism, Brahmanism and Theosophy, shuffles off her wrinkled coil amid a numerous following of dupes who rather expected her faked science to keep her perpetually alive or raise her up from the dead.

Is there any difficulty in discovering the fraud in revelations of such a kind? Yet they claim divine inspiration and very often contain passages which show sources of information and deceit not altogether human. The sinister manifestation of spiritism and the astounding information often furnished by mediums, are not all sleight of hand or illusion of the senses; some of these things can be explained only by assuming interference of a sinister spirit world.

REALLY ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR PRIVATE REVELATIONS

Would it not be absurd to concede the communication with evil spirits or departed souls, damned or otherwise, (and all reasonable people concede it), and deny the possibility of communing with the good spirits or souls and with God? Who would want to limit the power of God in this way? It will not do to claim that all the communication of God and the good spirits takes the ordinary course provided in the public ministry of the true religion. For it does not. Saint Paul saw things that he dared not reveal, though he was not slow in writing down his other revelations. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility was privately revealed many times before they were officially defined and accepted as self-understood truths by all

reasonable men. Before these doctrines were defined, who had the greater prudence and insight? Those people who refused to believe these truths because they were privately revealed, or those who examined those revelations and finding them humanly credible, and not contrary to the true religion, simply accepted them as revealed by God? I should think the latter showed themselves ahead of their times and far more enlightened in their belief than the former, who persisted in a finical unbelief concerning all private revelations.

NO DIFFICULTY TO DISTINGUISH THE TRUE FROM THE FALSE

If we find that the author of alleged private revelations has been a faithful adherent of the one true religion established by God, that he has led a good and blameless life, that his writings do not run counter to the Bible nor to the public teachings of the true Church, that he was not actuated by motives of selfish gain, pecuniary or otherwise, that the writings themselves tend toward the practice of perfection both as far as the writer as well as the reader is concerned, that they have not been openly disapproved by the Church; then certainly, if the information recorded is such that it would presuppose supernatural inspiration or direct communication with the higher world, we are not justified in immediately rejecting the writings as fraudulent. Closer examination may easily lead to reasonable certainty that they are privately revealed. But we all know that this acceptance can never mean anything more than a mere human belief, not the belief of faith, such as for instance is demanded by holy Scripture. In fact, as

soon as any such writing lays claim to implicit faith, it certainly is no revelation and ought to be rejected at once as spurious.

MARY OF AGREDA

She was the daughter of Francis Coronel and Catherine of Arana, born April 2, 1602, in the small town of Agreda near Tarazona in Spain. In 1617 she entered the convent of the discalced Franciscan Nuns in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Agreda and took her vows one year later. In 1625 she was chosen abbess, much against her wishes, and, except during a short intermission, was re-elected every three years until she died, in 1665. The fame of her prudence and foresight, not only in the government of her convent but in other matters, soon spread outside the convent walls and persons of the highest rank in state and Church were eager to obtain her counsel in important affairs. King Philip IV visited her several times in her convent and corresponded with her about national affairs for many years.

But she was no less famous for her exalted virtues. In many respects her life was a faithful copy of that of St. Francis. The miracle of bilocation related of her is in fact more remarkable and lasted a longer time than that recorded anywhere in the lives of the saints. Her good sense, her truthfulness, her sincerity, her humility, her unselfish love of God and man eminently adapted her for the communication of messages from God to men.

WHAT INDUCED HER TO WRITE

In all writing that lays claim to private revelation, the motives of the writer must be closely scrutinized. If it appears to be a self-imposed task, for selfish ends, pe-

cuniary or otherwise, tending to particularity in religious teachings or practice not approved by the established faith or written without knowledge or consultation of the rightful superiors, it ought to be rejected as spurious. God will reveal nothing for such purpose or under such circumstances, and He will permit human error and deceit and the sinister influence of hell to run their natural course. Nothing of all this appears in the writings of Mary of Agreda. Though she was urged interiorly and exteriorly to record the facts of history revealed to her concerning the Mother of God, she resisted for twelve years and was finally induced to write only through the positive commands of her superiors. Reluctantly she began her history in the year 1637 and finished it in the year 1645, continually asking to be relieved from the task because she thought herself unworthy. As soon as the insistence of her superiors relaxed and an error of judgment on the part of an outside confessor gave her a plausible excuse, she burned all her writings, thus destroying the labor of many years. When this came to the knowledge of the higher authorities and when they insisted on her rewriting the history which continued to be supernaturally made known to her, she again succeeded in delaying the task for ten years. Only the strictest command under obedience and the threat of censures finally induced her to write the manuscript which she began in 1655 and finished in 1665, and which is still preserved in the convent of Agreda.

WHY REVEALED TO A WOMAN

It is to be remembered that God's almighty power is restricted to no particular instrument; He creates out of nothing. In the case of Balaam, he used not only that

wicked man but even his beast for special revelation. It does seem that He prefers women for private revelation. He chose men to reveal the great public truths of the Bible and to attend to the public teaching, but to women in the new law He seems to have consigned the task of private revelations. At least most of the known private revelations have been furnished us by women and not men. We must infer from this that they are better adapted for this work. In fact, no special learning or great natural insight is required of a messenger; such qualities might tend to corrupt or narrow down the inspired message to mere human proportions, whereas private revelation is given precisely for the purpose of communicating higher truths than can be known or understood naturally. Humility, great piety and love, deep faith are the requisites of God's special messengers. Women as a rule are more inclined to these virtues than men, and therefore are not so apt to trim the message of God down to their own natural powers of understanding. In choosing women for his special revelations He gives us to understand from the outset, that what He wishes to reveal is above the natural faculties of perception and insight of either man or woman.

HOW WAS "CIUDAD" RECEIVED?

As soon as the "City of God" appeared in print it was welcomed and extolled as a most wonderful work. The different translations found no less enthusiastic welcome in nearly all the European countries. It secured the immediate approbation and encomium of the ordinaries, the universities, the learned and eminent men of christendom. There is probably no other book which was so closely scrutinized by those in authority, both civil and religious,

and afterwards so signally approved as the "City of God." By order of Innocent XI., Alexander VIII., Clement IX., Benedict XIII., and Benedict XIV. it was repeatedly subjected to the closest scrutiny and declared authentic, worthy of devout perusal and free from error. The title "Venerabilis" was conferred upon the author. A large sized volume would be required to record the praises and commendations written in favor of the great "City of God."

OPPOSITION

As the "City of God" so strenuously maintains the prerogatives of the Mother of God and the authority of the Popes, it was not to be expected that it should escape the malicious slander and intrigues of those tainted with Jansenism and Gallicanism. Many members of the Sorbonne in Paris were secret or open adherers of these sects at the time when the "Ciudad" was first published in French about the year 1678. The first translation in French was very inexact and contained many interpolations and false versions of the original. Dr. Louis Elias du Pin and Dr. Hideux of the Sorbonne made this translation the foundation of virulent attacks. Du Pin was called by Pope Clement XI. "Nequioris doctrinæ hominem," "A man of pernicious doctrines." Hideux turned out to be a rabid and fanatical Jansenist, cut off from the Church as a heretic. As they and other members of the Sorbonne succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of influential Gallican courtiers and church dignitaries, both in Paris and at Rome, they secured a clandestine prohibition of the "City of God," which appeared in the acts of the Congregation of the Office. When it was discovered, no one could be found who would dare stand

sponsor for it, and immediately Pope Innocent XI., on November 9, 1681, annulled the act, positively decreeing that the "City of God" be freely spread among the clergy and laity. The very fact that this prohibition did not issue from the Index Commission but from a department not concerned with the examination of books, proves that it owes its insertion to Gallican intrigue, secretly extending even to high circles in Rome, and to the fair-minded, this sectarian attempt will be a convincing argument for the excellence and orthodoxy of the doctrines contained in the revelations of Mary of Agreda.

MANY EDITIONS

The popularity and excellence of the great history of the Mother of God is also evidenced by its widespread diffusion. It has appeared in over sixty editions in Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, German, Latin, Arabic, Greek, and Polish. Does it not seem providential that the first English translation of this great work should have been reserved for our own times? No other language on the face of the earth is the medium of so many theories, sects and isms as the English language and the "City of God" is a most timely and efficient antidote for the epidemic of false doctrines, which is sweeping over all the earth, and affects especially the English-speaking portion of the human race.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE TRANSLATOR

The translator and promoter of the "City of God" is confident that it will not be one of the books idly filling the shelves of libraries, but one which at the first cursory

inspection will arouse the desire of further inquiry and lead to repeated and attentive perusal.

The translation herewith offered is as exact and as perfect a rendition of the original Spanish into English, as ten years of assiduous labor and a considerable experience in literary production give a right to expect. The subject-matter surely ought to secure for it a proper place in the more elevated ranks of English Literature.

May this first English translation, under the guidance of our holy faith, bring forth abundant fruits of the Spirit among English-speaking people in all parts of the world.

Feast of the Annunciation, 1912.

Fiscar Marison, South Chicago.



APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3, 1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne, known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting the publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII, Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites, approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and written by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is officially estabiished. The great pope Benedict XIII, when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revelations as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy, objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his objections as interfering with the decree of pope Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has resulted so far in securing her the title of Venerabilis, thus clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German translation in 1885, which was approved and highly recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the following terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation to the annotated translation of the Spanish original "Ciudad de Dios" of Mary of Jesus and recommend this book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occasion of great spiritual blessings."

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

✠IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Germany, etc.

"According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and Clement XI the book known as 'Ciudad de Dios' written by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may be read by all the faithful."

"A number of episcopal approbations, the recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent members of different orders, coincide in extolling the above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal D'Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty years of his previous life as of small consequence in comparison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Venerable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbé Emery, adds: "Only since I read the revelations of Mary of Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother."

"We therefore do not hesitate—in granting our episcopal approbation to—"Ciudad de Dios"—and wish to recommend it to the faithful and especially to our clergy."

✠FRANZ ALBERT,
Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.
September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios" is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for the printing of the new edition of the "City of God" now about to be published by the religious of the above-named convent, with the authenticated autograph manuscript of that work there preserved,—and having ascertained by a personal revision of a great part of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition of 'Ciudad de Dios,' with the exception of a few mere orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to the autograph of that work as composed and written by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal] ✠JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:—

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English translation of the work entitled 'Ciudad de Dios.' Wishing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

✠H. J. Alerding, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publication of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these divisions as follow:

The Conception, Books 1 and 2.
The Incarnation, Books 3 and 4.
The Transfixion, Books 5 and 6.
The Coronation, Books 7 and 8.

The Conception

The Sacramental Mysteries wrought by the Most High in the Queen of Heaven from the Time of her Immaculate Conception until the Incarnation of the Word in her virginal Womb, and how much Merit She herself acquired through divine Grace by profiting from the Favors conferred upon Her during those first fifteen Years of her Life.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

LIFE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

GIVING THE REASON FOR WRITING IT, AND EXPLAINING OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES IN CONNECTION THEREWITH.

1. I should not be astonished to hear myself condemned as audacious, foolhardy and presumptuous by any person who will begin to realize (if realized it can be) that I, a simple woman, who is of herself but sheer weakness and ignorance and who is, on account of her sins, most unworthy, has resolved and attempted to write of divine and supernatural things. This condemnation will be the more justified in these, our present times, in which the holy Church, our mother, is so abundantly supplied with teachers and holy men, so rich in doctrines of the holy Fathers and Doctors; in this our most opportune age, when even prudent and wise persons, full of holy zeal in the spiritual life, are disturbed and troubled at the least mention of a higher life, looking upon visions and revelations as most suspicious and dangerous paths for the pursuit of Christian perfection. If no excuse can be found for such an enterprise in itself, or even for attempting things that are so far above and superior to what man can hope to compass, and so far beyond all human capacities, then we can only conclude that to undertake them is either a sign of perverse judgment or the result of an activity far surpassing all the human power.

2. As faithful children of the holy Church we must

confess that all the mortals, not only with the use of all their natural powers, but with the simultaneous use of all the common and ordinary graces, are but incapable and, as it were, mute and ignorant weaklings for so difficult an undertaking as to explain and describe the hidden mysteries and magnificent sacraments which the powerful arm of the Most High has wrought in that Creature whom, as his Mother, He has designed to be an immense ocean of grace and privilege and the Depositary of the greatest treasures of thē Divinity. How incapable must our weakness acknowledge itself to be, when even the angelic spirits confess that words fail them when attempting to describe that which is so far above their thoughts and capacities. The life of this Phœnix among the works of God is a book so sealed up that none is found among all the creatures of heaven and earth, worthy to open it (Apoc. 4, 3). It is evident then, that only the powerful Lord can unseal it; He who made Her more perfect than all the creatures; or She herself, the Mistress, our Queen and Mother, who was worthy to receive and properly to appreciate her ineffable gifts. It is in her power to select suitable instruments, and such as for her glory seem capable of manifesting these gifts in the proportion, at the time, and in the manner serviceable to her Onlybegotten Son.

3. I would willingly maintain that these instruments can be no other than the teachers and learned saints of the Catholic Church, or the doctors of the schools, who have all taught the way of truth and life. But the thoughts and the judgments of the Most High are exalted as much above our own as heaven is exalted above the earth and no one knows his mind and no one can counsel Him in his works (Rom. 11, 34); He it is that holds the scales of the sanctuary in his hands (Apoc. 6,

5), and who weighs the winds (Job 28, 25); who grasps in his hands all the orbs (Is. 40, 12), and who, by the equity of his most holy counsels, disposes of all things with weight and measure (Wis. 11, 21), assigning to each one opportune time and place. He dispenses the light of wisdom (Ecclus. 24, 37) and by his most equitable bounty He distributes it, and no one can ascend to the heavens to draw it down (Baruch 3, 29), or fetch it from the clouds, or know its ways or investigate the hidden paths thereof (Baruch 3, 31). He alone observes it as it is in itself, and transfuses it as the vapor and emanation of his immense charity (Wis. 7, 25) as the brightness of his eternal light, as the flawless reflection and image of his eternal bounty, through holy souls among the nations in order to make them friends of the Most High and constitute them as Prophets (Wis. 7, 27). The Lord alone knows why and for what purpose He thus prepared me, the last of his creatures; why He thus called and raised me, obliged and compelled me, to write the life of his most holy Mother, our Queen and Lady.

4. It is beyond the prudent surmise of any man that, without this influence and power of the Most High, the thought of such a work should enter into a human heart, or such an enterprise should take shape in my mind. For I acknowledge and confess myself to be a weak woman, wanting in all virtue; therefore, it should be far from my thoughts to approach such a work, but equally as far from me to refuse it on my own account. In order that a just estimate may be had in this matter I will mention in simple truth something of that which happened to me regarding this history.

5 In the eighth year after the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my life, obedience imposed upon me the office which I unworthily hold at the pres-

ent day, namely to be the abbess of this convent. I found myself much troubled, sorrowful and discouraged, because neither my age nor my inclinations were such as are requisite for governing and commanding, but they were rather such as befitted one who should be governed and obey. I knew also, that in order to invest me with this office a dispensation had been obtained. On account of these and other just reasons, the terrors with which the Most High has crucified me during all my life, were much augmented. In addition thereto God left me in dreadful doubt whether I was on the secure path or whether I should obtain or lose his friendship and grace.

6. In this tribulation I cried to the Lord with all my heart that He help me and if it be his will that I should be freed from this danger and burden. Although it is true that the Lord had prepared me sometime beforehand and commanded me to accept the office, and although when I tried to excuse myself on account of my pusillanimity, He always consoled me and reiterated his command, I nevertheless did not cease my petitions, but rather augmented them. For I perceived and understood in the Lord that, although He showed this to be his holy will, which I could not hinder, yet I was aware at the same time that he left me free to retire and resist, and, if I wished, to act according to my weakness as a creature and in the consciousness of my total insufficiency; such is the prudence of the Lord in his dealings with men. Relying on this kindness of the Lord, I increased my efforts to be relieved from this evident danger, which is so little estimated by our human nature with its bad habits and disorderly passions. The Lord, however, repeated continually that it was his will and He consoled me, admonishing me through his holy angels to obey.

7. I fled in this affliction to our Queen and Lady as

to my only refuge in all troubles, and after I had manifested to Her my way of life and my desires, She deigned to answer me in these sweetest of words: "My daughter, console thyself and do not be disturbed in thy heart on account of this labor; prepare thyself for it and I will be thy Mother and Superior, whom thou shalt obey; and the same I will be to thy subjects. I will supplement thy deficiencies and thou shalt be my agent, through whom the will of my Son and my God shall be fulfilled. In all thy temptations and troubles thou shalt take refuge with me, confer about them with me, and take the advice, which I will give thee in all things. Obey me, and I will favor thee and will continue to be attentive to thy affliction." These were the words of the Queen, as consoling as they were soothing to my soul. From that day on the Mother of mercy multiplied her mercies toward me, her slave; for She became more intimate with me and continued her intercourse with my soul, receiving me, listening to me, teaching me with ineffable condescension, giving me counsel and encouragement in my affliction, filling my soul with the light and knowledge of eternal life and commanding me to renew the vows of my profession in her presence. Finally this our most amiable Mother and Lady revealed Herself still more fully to her slave, withdrawing the veil from the hidden sacraments and magnificent mysteries which are contained, though unknown to mortals, in her most holy life. And, although this blessed and supernatural light was uninterrupted, and especially clear on her festival days and on other occasions when I was instructed in many mysteries; yet it was not so full, frequent and clear as that which was afterwards vouchsafed to me when She added the command that I write the history of her life according as her Majesty herself should dictate and inspire me. Particularly

on one of these festivals of the most holy Mary the Most High informed me that He had in reserve many hidden sacraments and blessings, which He had conferred upon this his heavenly Mother in the days of her pilgrimage and that it was his intention to manifest them to me, in order that I might write them down according to her guidance. This will of the Most High, though I resisted it, was continually present to my mind for the space of ten years, until I attempted the first writing of this divine history.

8. Consulting about my doubts with the holy princes and angels, whom the Most High had appointed to direct this work of writing the history of our Queen, and manifesting to them how great was my disturbance and affliction of heart and how stuttering and mute was my tongue for such an arduous task, they replied over and over again that it was the will of the Most High that I write the life of his most pure Mother and our Mistress. On one day especially, when I made many objections and declared to them my difficulties, and my incapability and great fears, they spoke to me these words: "With good reason thou fearest and art disturbed, O soul, doubtest and hesitatest in a matter, where we angels ourselves would do the same, as considering ourselves unable worthily to describe the high and magnificent doings of the Omnipotent in the Mother of Piety and our own Queen. But remember, dearest soul, that the firmament, the whole machinery of the world and all things created will sooner fail, than the words of the Most High Many times He has promised to his creatures, and in the holy Scriptures it is recorded, that the obedient man shall speak of victories over his enemies and shall not be reprehensible in obeying (Prov. 21, 28). And when He created the first man and gave him the command not to eat

of the tree of knowledge, he established the virtue of obedience, and swearing He swore, in order to give greater assurance to man. For the Lord has repeatedly given such an oath; for instance, when He promised to Abraham that the Messias should descend from his race, He added thereto the assurance of an oath (Gen. 22, 16); the same He did when He created the first man, assuring him that the obedient shall not err. He also repeated this oath, when He ordained that his most holy Son should die (Luke 1, 73); and He gave a like assurance to men that they, who should obey this second Adam, imitating Him in the obedience, by which He restored what the first lost through his disobedience, shall live forever and that the enemy shall have no part in them. Remember, Mary, that all obedience takes its rise from God as from its first and principal source, and we angels obey the power of his divine right hand and his most just will. We cannot contravene or ignore it, because we see the immutable being of God face to face and we perceive that his will is holy, pure and true, most equitable and just. Now this certainty, which we angels possess through the beatific vision, you mortals also possess in its proper proportion as wayfarers through the words of the Lord concerning your prelates and superiors: "He who hears you, hears Me; and who obeys you, obeys Me." (Luke 20, 16). Now since obedience is rendered on account of God, who is the principal Cause and who is the Superior of all, it is befitting to his almighty Providence that He take the consequences of obedience, whenever that which is commanded is not in itself sinful. Accordingly the Lord assures us of these things by an oath, and He will sooner cease to exist, though this is impossible, than that He will fail in his word. In the same way as the children proceed from their parents, and

all the living from Adam, multiplied from his natural being in his posterity; so also all superiors are constituted by God as by the supreme Lord on whose account we yield obedience to them; human beings to their living superiors, we angels to our higher hierarchies of the same nature, and all beings together, in their superiors, obey the eternal God. Remember now, that all of these have directed and commanded thee to do that, about which thou still hesitatest; if thou now shouldst begin to write by mistake, intending thereby to fulfill his commands in obedience, then the Most High would do with thy pen the same as He did with the knife of Abraham, when he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac, for on that occasion the Lord commanded one of us angels to withhold the arm and the knife. He did not thus command us to withhold thy pen, but has ordered us with lightest breath to speed it on, and while gazing on his Majesty, to direct and assist thee by illuminating thy intellect."

9. Such encouragement and instruction my holy angels and lords gave me at this time. On many other occasions the prince saint Michael informed me of the same wish and command of the Most High. By the continual enlightenments, favors and instructions of this great prince, I have understood great sacraments and mysteries of the Lord and of the Queen of heaven; for this angel was one of those, who guarded and assisted Her and who were delegated from the angelic choirs, as I will relate in its place (Part I, 201-206). He is at the same time the general patron and protector of the holy Church. He was a special witness and faithful minister of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. This I have often heard of saint Michael himself, who showed me singular favors in my troubles and dangers, and has promised me his assistance and direction in this undertaking.

10. In addition to all this and other facts, which need not here be mentioned, and in addition to what I shall say farther on, the Lord has directly, in his own person, commanded and manifested to me his will many times, and in words which I shall presently repeat. He said to me one day on the festival of the Presentation of most holy Mary in the temple: "My spouse, many mysteries pertaining to my Mother and the saints have been made manifest in the Church militant; but many are still hidden, especially the interior secrets of their lives, and these I wish now to make known; and I desire thee to put them down in writing according as thou art directed by the most pure Mary. I will reveal and explain them to thee; for until now I have, according to the hidden designs of my wisdom, kept them in reserve, because the time for revealing them was not befitting or opportune to my Providence. Now, however, it is, and it is my will that thou write. Obey, soul!"

11. All these facts which I have mentioned, and many more which I could mention, would not have been urgent enough to rouse my will to an enterprise so arduous and so foreign to my condition, if to them had not been added the motive of obedience to my superiors, who are set to govern my soul and teach me the way of truth. For certainly my mistrusts and fears were not so unimportant as to permit me to come to a full decision without their commands in so great a matter, when in resolving upon others, also supernatural and vastly less difficult, I rely so much on the guidance of obedience. As an ignorant woman I have always sought this northstar, for it is a duty incumbent on all to test all things, even though they seem to be most noble and excellent beyond suspicion, by the approbation of the teachers and ministers of the holy Church. Such assurance I have been solicitous to pro-

cure for the direction of my soul, and more particularly in this undertaking of writing the life of the Queen of heaven. I have frequently tried to prevent my superiors from being moved by any accounts of my interior experiences, disguising, as much as I could, many things, and in tears begging the Lord to enlighten them and to fill them with mistrust against me, to watch over them lest they be deceived or lest they permit me to be deceived or misdirected. Many times I have desired that the very thought of allowing me to engage in this enterprise would fade from their minds.

12. I will also confess that the demon, availing himself of my natural dispositions and of my fears, has made great efforts to hinder this work by seeking to terrify and afflict me. He would no doubt have succeeded in keeping me from it if the zeal and persistence of my superiors had not counteracted my cowardice. In this persecution the Lord, the most pure Virgin and the holy angels often took occasion to renew their enlightenment, their tokens and wonders. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I deferred, or to speak more appropriately, I resisted this undertaking many years; I refused compliance, as I will describe further on, not having the boldness to attempt the execution of something so far above all my powers. And I believe that this was not without special providence of his Majesty; for in the course of those years so many things have happened to me, and I may say, so many mysterious and various difficulties intervened, that I would not have been able to preserve the tranquillity and quiet of spirit, which is necessary for retaining the proper light and information; for not in all states of mind, though they are of the highest and most advanced, can the soul engage in that exalted activity which is necessary to correspond to such exquisite and delicate in-

fluences. In addition to this, there was still another reason, namely: During this protracted delay I could inform myself and assure myself of the truth of these things not only by means of the new enlightenment, which grew as time passed on, and by the prudence which experience gives, but also by the persevering insistence of the Lord, of the holy angels and of my superiors, under whose obedience I lived. Likewise an opportunity was given me to quiet my fears and misgivings, to overcome my cowardice and perplexity, and to trust that to the Lord, which I would not trust to my weakness.

13. Confiding then in the great virtue of obedience, I resolved in the name of the Lord and of my Queen and Mistress to lay aside my reluctance. I call this virtue great, not only because by it the most noble activities in the faculties of a creature, namely the mind, the judgment and free will, are offered as a holocaust to the Lord; but also because no other virtue ever assures success more unfailingly than obedience; for by it the creature then does not operate of itself alone, but also as an instrument of him that governs and commands. This was the assurance of Abraham, when he overcame the force of the natural love for his son Isaac (Gen. 22, 3). And if it was sufficient for such an act, and sufficient to detain the sun and the heavens in their swift course (Josue 10, 13), it can certainly be sufficient to influence the movement of the earth. Perchance if the hand of Oza had been guided by obedience, he would perhaps not have been punished as presumptuous in touching the ark. Well do I know that I am more unworthy than Oza in stretching out my hand to touch, not the lifeless and figurative ark of the old covenant, but the living Ark of the New Testament, which contained the manna of the Divinity, the source of grace and the New Law. But if I

remain silent, I fear with good reason to disobey most high commands, and I could exclaim with Isaias: "Woe is me because I kept my peace!" (Is. 6, 5). Therefore, O my Queen and Lady, it is better that thy benignest goodness and mercy and the blessings of thy liberal hand should shine forth through my base and unworthy efforts; it is better that I should experience thy blessings in obeying thy commands, than that I should fall into thy displeasure. It will be a work of thy clemency, O purest Mother, to raise the poor from the earth and to execute through a weak and unfit instrument, a work so difficult; for thereby Thou shalt magnify thy condescension and the graces which thy most holy Son communicates to Thee. Moreover Thou thereby shalt exclude that deceitful presumption, which might make us imagine that by human efforts, or by earthly prudence, or by the force and authority of deep discussion, this work is accomplished. Thou thereby showest, that by divine virtue Thou awakenest anew the hearts of the faithful, drawing them toward Thee, Thou fountain of kindness and mercy. Speak therefore, O Lady, that thy servant may hear with an ardent desire fully to obey Thee (I Kings 3, 19). But how can my desires ever reach or equal my indebtedness? A befitting response on my part will be impossible, but if it were possible, I would desire to give it. O powerful and exalted Queen, fulfill thy promises by manifesting to me thy graces and attributes, in order that thy greatness may be made known and heralded through the nations and generations. Speak, O Lady, for thy servant heareth; speak and magnify the Most High in the powerful and wonderful works, which his right hand performed for Thee in thy most profound humility. Let them flow from the hollow of his hands filled with hyacinths into thine (Cant. 5, 14), and from

thine to thy devout servants, in order that the angels may bless Him, the just magnify Him, and the sinners seek Him. Let all of them see the example of thy highest sanctity and purity, and by the grace of thy most holy Son, let me be favored with this mirror and efficacious rule, by which I can set my life in order. For this is to be the principal purpose and first object of my solicitude in writing thy life. This Thou hast repeatedly intimated to me, condescending to offer me a living pattern and a mirror without flaw, in which I should see and according to which I should adorn my soul, so as to become worthy to be thy daughter and the bride of thy most holy Son.

14. This shall be my whole object and intention; and therefore I shall not write as a teacher, but as a disciple; not as one instructing, but as one trying to learn, knowing that it is the duty of women to be silent in the holy Church, and to listen to the teachers (I Cor. 14, 34). But as an instrument of the Queen of heaven I will declare what She deigns to teach me and whatever She commands me; for all the souls are capable of receiving the Spirit, which her divine Son has promised to pour out over men of all conditions (Joel 2, 28). The souls are also able to communicate it in a befitting manner, whenever a higher authority acting according to the dispensations of Christ's Church so disposes. I am now convinced that the Church has authorized this history through my superiors. That I should err is possible, and to an ignorant woman, natural; but then I err, while obeying and not acting of my own free will; thus I remit myself and subject myself to those who are my guides and to the correction of the holy Catholic Church, to whose ministers I fly in all my difficulties. And I wish that my superior, teacher and confessor be a witness and a censor of this doctrine, which I receive, and also a

severe and vigilant judge of the manner in which I put it into practice, or fail in the fulfilling of the obligations consequent upon this blessing.

15. Pursuant to the will of the Lord and the command of obedience, I have written for the second time this heavenly history; for during the first writing of it, though the light by which I perceived the mysteries was abundant and fruitful in proportion as my shortcomings were great, my tongue was unequal to the task of finding the proper terms, and my pen not swift enough for a full statement. I omitted some things, and with the lapse of time and by the aid of new enlightenments, I found myself better prepared to write at this second time Nevertheless there always remains much of what I understood and have seen, which I must leave unsaid; since to say all will never be possible. Besides these reasons, there was another known to me in the Lord, namely; That in my first writing my mind was much hindered from attending to the matter and arrangement of this work by my temptations and great fears. They raised such tempests of contrary thoughts and suggestions within me, that, deeming it the greatest presumption to have attempted such an arduous task, I concluded to burn it. And I believe that this did not happen without the permission of the Lord, for in the turbulency of my soul I could not present myself in a state entirely befitting and desirable to the Lord for writing and engraving into my heart and spirit his doctrine, as He commands me to do now and as can be seen from the following event.

16. On one of the festival days of the Purification of Our Lady, after having received the most holy Sacrament, I wished to celebrate this holy festival, which was the anniversary of my profession, with many acts of thanksgiving and of total resignation to the Most High,

who without any merits of mine had chosen me as his spouse. While I was thus exciting these affections, I felt in my interior a most powerful change accompanied by abundant light which raised me and urged me strongly and sweetly toward the knowledge of the essence of God, his goodness, perfections and attributes, and to the disclosing of my own misery (Wis. 8, 1). And these different things, which were placed before my understanding at one and the same time, produced in me various effects: The first was that all the attention of my mind and all my aspirations were raised on high; the other effect was, that I was humbled in mind to the very dust, in such a way that it seemed to take away my own existence. At the same time I felt a most vehement sorrow and contrition for my grievous sins, joined to the determination to amend and to renounce all worldly things, aspiring instead toward complete love of God. In these affects I remained as if annihilated, and the greatest pain seemed but consolation, and death, but life. The Lord having pity on my faintness, in sheer mercy, spoke to me: "Be not dismayed, my daughter and spouse, for in order to pardon, to wash and to purify thee from thy sins, I will apply my infinite merits and the blood, which I shed for thee; animate thyself to desire all perfection in imitation of the life of the most holy Mary. Write it a second time in order that thou mayest supply what was wanting and impress her doctrines on thy heart. Do not again irritate my justice, nor show thyself thankless for my mercy by burning what thou shalt have written, lest my indignation deprive thee of the light which, without thy merits, thou hast received for the manifestation of these mysteries."

17. I immediately thereupon saw the Mother of God, who also spoke to me: "My daughter, as yet thou hast

not derived becoming fruit for thy soul from the tree of life, which was offered thee in the writing of my history, nor didst thou enter into the substance of its contents. Thou hast scarcely yet thought of this hidden manna, nor hast thou attained that perfect and ultimate preparation, which the Almighty requires in order to engrave and imprint, in a proper manner, my virtues into thy soul. I am to give thee the befitting qualities and perfections for that which the divine right hand is to accomplish in thee. I have asked Him that, through my intercession and through the abundant graces conferred upon me, I be permitted to adorn thee and compose thy soul, so that thou mayest turn again to the writing of my life with less attention to the material and more to the spiritual and substantial part of it. Remove the hindrances which oppose the currents of divine grace flowing to thee from the Almighty through me and make thyself capable of readily accepting the full portion assigned to thee by the divine will. See that thou do not curtail or limit it by thy shortcomings and imperfections." Thereupon I saw that the divine Mother clothed me in a garment whiter than the snow and more shining than the sun; and She girded me with a most precious girdle and said: "This is a participation of my purity." I also asked for the infused science of the Lord, which should serve me as most beautiful hair for my adornment and for other precious gifts and presents, the value of which I saw and knew was great, but which I was not able fully to estimate. After having thus adorned me, the heavenly Lady said: "Work faithfully and earnestly to imitate me and to be my most perfect daughter, engendered of my spirit, nourished at my breast. I give thee my blessing, in order that in my name and under my direction and assistance thou mayest again resume thy writing."

18. The whole of this holy life of Mary is divided, for greater perspicuity, into three parts. The first treats of all that pertains to the first fifteen years of her life, from the moment of her most pure Conception until the moment when in her virginal womb the eternal Word assumed flesh, including all that the Most High performed for Mary during these years. The second part embraces the mystery of the Incarnation, the whole life of Christ our Lord, his Passion and Death and his Ascension into heaven, thus describing the life of our Queen in union with that of her divine Son and all that She did while living with Him. The third part contains the life of the Mother of grace during the time She lived alone, deprived of the companionship of Christ our Redeemer, until the happy hour of her transition, assumption and crowning as the Empress of heaven, where She is to live eternally as the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. These three parts I subdivided into eight books, in order that they may be more convenient for use and always remain the subject of my thoughts, the spur of my will and my meditation day and night.

19. In order to say something of the time in which I wrote this heavenly history, it must be noticed that my father, brother Francis Coronel, and my mother, sister Catharine de Arana, my parents, founded in their own house this convent of the discalced nuns of the Immaculate Conception by the command and the will of God, which was declared to my mother, sister Catharine, in a special vision and revelation. This foundation took place on the octave of the Epiphany, January 13th, 1619. On the same day we took the habit, my mother and her two daughters; and my father took refuge in the order of our seraphic Father Saint Francis, in which two of his sons

had already been living as religious. There he took the habit, made his profession, lived an exemplary life, and died a most holy death. My mother and myself received the veil on the day of the Purification of the Queen of heaven, on the second of February, 1620. On account of the youth of the other daughter her profession was delayed. The Almighty in his sheer goodness favored our family so much, that all of us were consecrated to Him in the religious state. In the eighth year of the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my age, in the year of our Lord 1627, holy obedience imposed upon me the office of abbess, which to this day I unworthily hold. During the first ten years of the time in which I held this office, I received many commands from the Most High and from the Queen of heaven to write her holy life, and I continued in fear and doubt to resist these heavenly commands during all that time until the year 1637, when I began to write it the first time. On finishing it, being full of fears and tribulations, and being so counseled by a confessor (who directed me during the absence of my regular confessor), I burned all the writing containing not only this history, but many other grave and mysterious matters; for he told me, that women should not write in the Church. I obeyed his commands promptly; but I had to endure most severe reproaches on this account from my superiors and from the confessor, who knew my whole life. In order to force me to rewrite this history, they threatened me with censures. The Most High and the Queen of heaven also repeated their commands that I obey. During this second writing, so abundant was the light concerning the divine Essence, so copious were the blessings of the divine right hand for the renewal and vivification of my soul in the teachings of my heavenly Mother, so perfect

were the instructions and so exalted were the sacraments communicated to me, that it was necessary to write another book in connection with this history, the title of which will be: "Laws of the Spouse; heights of his divine love and fruits gathered from the tree of life of most holy Mary, our Lady." By divine favor I begin rewriting this history on the eighth of December, 1655, on the day of the Immaculate Conception.

BOOK ONE

Treats of the Divine Fore-Ordainment of Christ and His Mother as the Highest Ideals of all Creation; of the Creation of the Angels and Men as their Servants; of the Lineage of the Just Men, Finally Resulting in the Immaculate Conception and Birth of the Queen of Heaven; and of Her Life up to Her Presentation in the Temple.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING TWO SPECIAL VISIONS VOUCHSAFED TO MY SOUL BY THE LORD AND CONCERNING OTHER ENLIGHTENMENTS AND MYSTERIES, WHICH COMPELLED ME TO WITHDRAW FROM EARTHLY THINGS AND RAISED MY SPIRIT TO DWELL ABOVE THE EARTH.

1. I confess to Thee (Matth. 11, 25) and magnify Thee, King Most High, that in thy exalted Majesty Thou hast hidden these high mysteries from the wise and from the teachers, and in thy condescension hast revealed them to me, the most insignificant and useless slave of thy Church, in order that Thou mayest be the more admired as the omnipotent Author of this history in proportion as its instrument is despicable and weak.

2. After I had overcome the above mentioned reluctance and disorderly fears which caused so much timid hesitation, lest I suffer shipwreck in that sea of marvels, the most exalted Lord caused me to feel a virtue from on high, strong, sweet, efficacious and gentle; an enlightenment which illumined the intellect, subjected the rebellious will, tranquillizing, directing, governing and attracting the whole range of interior and exterior senses, thus

subjecting my entire being to the will and pleasure of the Most High and directing it in all things toward his honor and glory alone. Being thus prepared, I heard a voice from the Almighty, which called me and raised me up toward Him, exalting my dwelling-place on high (Ecclus. 51, 13) and strengthening me against the lions, that hungrily roared about me in order to snatch my soul from the enjoyment of great blessings in the boundless mysteries of this holy Tabernacle and City of God. Surrounded by the sorrows of death and perdition (Ps. 17, 5) and beset by the flames of Sodom and Babylon, in which we live, it liberated me from the portals of sorrow, into which I was enticed to enter. My enemies, forming visions of fallacious and deceitful delights for the misleading of my senses and the capture of them by pretended pleasures, set their allurements about me, in order that I might blindly turn toward these flames and be consumed by them. But from all these snares, laid for my footsteps (Ps. 56, 7), the Most High has delivered me, elevating my spirit and teaching me by the most efficacious admonitions the way of perfection. He invited me to a life spiritualized and angelic, and obliged me to live so cautiously, that in the midst of the furnace, the fire touched me not (Eccli. 51, 6). He often liberated me from the impure tongue, when it sought to communicate to me its earthly fables (Ps. 118, 85). His Majesty invited me to rise from the dust and littleness of the law of sin, to resist the defections of sin-infected nature and restrain its disorders, combatting them by his enlightening inspirations and raising myself above myself (Lam. 3, 28). He called me repeatedly, sometimes by the power of his omnipotence, sometimes with the correction of a Father, and at others with the love of a Spouse, saying: Arise, my dove, creation of my hands, make haste and come to Me (Cant. 2, 10),

who am the light and the way (John 8, 12), he that follows Me, walks not in darkness. Come to Me, who am the secure truth, and unchangeable holiness, to Me, who am the Powerful and the Wise, and the Teacher of those that follow wisdom (Wis. 7, 15).

3. These words were like arrows of sweet love, which filled me with admiration, reverence, knowledge and dread of my sins and of my vileness, so that I retired from his presence, shrunken and annihilated in the knowledge of my nothingness. And the Lord spoke to me: "Come, O soul, come to Me, who am thy omnipotent God, and although thou hast been a prodigal child and a sinner, arise from the earth and come to Me, thy Father; receive the stole of my friendship and the ring of a spouse."

4. Still remaining in that secure retreat of which I have spoken, I saw on a certain day, six angels, whom the Almighty had appointed to assist and guide me in this undertaking and in other dangers. Coming toward me, they purified and prepared my soul, and then presented me before the Lord. His Majesty gave to my interior being a new light and, as it were, a participation in glory, by which I was made capable and desirous of seeing and understanding the things, which are above the powers of a mere terrestrial creature. Soon after, two other angels, of a still higher order, appeared to me and I felt within me the power of the Lord by which they called me. I understood that they were most mysterious envoys and that they wished to reveal to me high and hidden sacraments. Eagerly I responded, and desirous of enjoying the blessing which they pointed out to me, I declared to them, how ardently I longed to see what they wished to show me and yet so mysteriously concealed from me. Then they at once answered with great seren-

ity: "Restrain thyself, O soul." I turned to the great princes of heaven and said: "Princes of the Almighty and messengers of the great King! Why do you now detain me contrary to my will and why do you defer my joy and my delight, after you have called me? What force is this of yours, and what power, which calls me, fills me with fervor, which allures and yet detains me, which attracts me to follow after the odor of my beloved Lord and of his ointments, and yet restrains me with strong bonds? Tell me the cause of all this!" They answered: "Because, in order to be instructed in all these mysteries, thou must needs, O soul, come with bare feet and despoiled of all thy desires and passions; for these mysteries do not accommodate or lend themselves to disordered inclinations. Take off thy shoes like Moses (Exodus 3, 5), for such was the command given to him before he could see the wonderful bush." "Princes of heaven and my lords," I answered, "much was asked of Moses, when he received the command to perform the works of an angel while yet living in mortal flesh: but he was a saint, and I am but a sinner full of miseries. My heart is disturbed and I am in conflict with the slavery and the oppression of sin, which I feel in my members, and which are opposed to the law of the spirit" (Rom. 7, 23). To which they rejoined: "Soul, it would indeed be for thee a most difficult enterprise, if thou hadst to execute it merely with thy own power; but the Most High, who wishes to see in thee this disposition, is powerful, and He will not deny to thee his help, if from thy heart thou ask his assistance and thou prepare thyself to receive it. And his power, which caused the bush to burn and at the same time prevented it from being consumed, can prevent also the fire of the passions which encompass and beset the soul, from consuming it, if it

truly desires to be saved. His Majesty asks for that which He desires, and can execute what He asks. Strengthened by Him, thou canst do that which He commands (Phil. 4, 13); take off thy shoes and weep in bitter sorrow, call out to Him from the bottom of thy heart, in order that thy prayers may be heard and thy desires fulfilled."

5. Presently I saw a most precious veil covering a treasure and my heart burned with desire to see it raised and to look upon the sacred mystery which I understood was hidden beneath. My desire was answered in the following manner: "Obey, O soul, in what was enjoined and commanded thee; despoil thyself of thyself, and then this mystery will be revealed to thee." I resolved to amend my life and to overcome my appetite; I sighed and wept with many aspirations from my inmost soul for the manifestation of this blessing. While I made my good resolves, the veil which covered the treasure, began to be lifted. Presently the veil fell entirely and my interior eyes saw what I shall not know how to describe in words. I saw a great and mysterious sign in heaven; I saw a Woman, a most beautiful Lady and Queen, crowned with the stars, clothed with the sun, and the moon was at her feet (Apoc. 12, 1). The holy angels spoke to me: "This is that blessed Woman, whom Saint John saw in the Apocalypse, and in whom are enclosed, deposited and sealed up the wonderful mysteries of the Redemption. So much has the most high and powerful God favored this Creature, that we, his angelic spirits, are full of astonishment. Contemplate and admire her prerogatives, record them in writing, because that is the purpose for which, according to the measure suitable to thy circumstances, they will be made manifest to thee." I was made to see such wonders, that the

greatness of them took away my speech, and my admiration of them suspended my other faculties; nor do I think that all the created beings in this mortal life will ever comprehend them, as will appear in the sequel of my discourse.

6. On another day, while my soul sweetly tarried in the aforesaid habitation, I heard a voice from the Most High saying: "My spouse, I desire that thou rouse thyself in earnest to seek Me, and to love Me with fervor; that thou make thy life more angelic than human, and that thou forget entirely the terrestrial affairs. I wish to raise thee as one that is poor from the dust, and as one full of need from the dunghill (Ps. 112, 7), so that, while I exalt thee, thou mayest humiliate thyself, and the nard of thy sweet odor may remain in my presence; knowing thy own misery, be thou convinced from the bottom of thy heart, that thou meritest for thyself only tribulation and humiliation. Consider my greatness and thy littleness; remember that I am just and holy; I deal with thee considerately, making use rather of my mercy and not chastising thee as thou deservest. Strive to build upon this foundation of humility all the other virtues in order to fulfill my wishes. I appoint my Virgin Mother to teach, correct and reprehend thee. She will spur thee onward and accompany thy footsteps according to my liking and pleasure."

7. While the Most High spoke to me the Queen stood near by; and the heavenly Princess disdained not to accept the office which his Majesty assigned to Her. She accepted it benignly and said to me: "My daughter, I desire that thou be my disciple and my companion, and I will be thy Teacher; but remember that thou must obey me courageously and from this day on no vestige of a daughter of Adam must be found in thee. My conduct

and my works during my pilgrimage on earth, and the wonders, which the arm of the Almighty wrought through me, shall be the mirror and the model of thy life." I prostrated myself before the throne of the King and Queen of the universe and I offered to obey Her in all things; I gave thanks to the Highest for the favor, which He, so much in excess of my merits, conferred upon me in giving me such a Guide and Protectress. Into Her hands I renewed the vows of my profession; I offered myself to Her and proposed to work anew at the amendment of my life. Again the Lord spoke to me: "Behold and see!" Turning I saw a most beautiful ladder with many rungs; around it were many angels, and a great number of them were ascending and descending upon it. His Majesty said to me: "This is the mysterious ladder of Jacob, the house of God and the portal of heaven (Gen. 28, 17); if thou wilt earnestly strive to live irreprehensible in my eyes, thou wilt ascend upon it to Me."

8. This promise incited my desires, set my will aflame and enraptured my spirit; with many tears I grieved, that I should be a burden to myself in my sinfulness (Job. 7, 20). I sighed for the end of my captivity and longed to arrive where there would be no obstacle to my love. In this anxiety I passed some days, trying to reform my life; I again made a general confession and corrected some of my imperfections. The vision of the ladder continued without intermission, but it was not explained to me. I made many promises to the Lord and proposed to free myself from all terrestrial things and to reserve the powers of my will entirely for his love, without allowing it to incline toward any creature, be it ever so small or unsuspicious; I repudiated all visible and sensible things. Having passed some days in these

affections and sentiments, I was informed by the Most High, that the ladder signified the life of the most Holy Virgin, its virtues and sacraments. His Majesty said to me: "I desire, my spouse, that thou ascend this stair of Jacob and enter through this door of heaven to acquire the knowledge of my attributes and occupy thyself in the contemplation of my Divinity. Arise then and walk, ascend by it to Me. These angels, which surround it and accompany it, are those that I appointed as the guardians of Mary, as the defenders and sentinels of the citadel of Sion. Consider Her attentively, and, meditating on her virtues, seek to imitate them." It seemed to me then, that I ascended the ladder and that I recognized the great wonders and the ineffable prodigies of the Lord in a mere Creature and the greatest sanctity and perfection of virtue ever worked by the arm of the Almighty. At the top of the ladder I saw the Lord of hosts and the Queen of all creation. They commanded me to glorify, exalt and praise Him on account of these great mysteries and to write down so much of them, as I might bring myself to understand. The exalted and high Lord gave me a law, written not only on tablets, as He gave to Moses (Exod. 31, 18), but one wrought by his omnipotent finger in order that it might be studied and observed (Ps. 1, 2). He moved my will so that in her presence I promised to overcome my repugnance and with her assistance to set about writing her history, paying attention to three things: First, to remember that the creature must ever seek to acknowledge the profound reverence due to God and to abase itself in proportion to the condescension of his Majesty toward men and that the effect of greater favors and benefits must be a greater fear, reverence, attention and humility; secondly, to be ever mindful of the obligation of all men, who are so for-

getful of their own salvation, to consider and learn what they owe to the Queen and Mother of piety on account of the part assumed by Her in the Redemption, to think of the love and the reverence which She showed to God and the honor in which we are to hold this great Lady; thirdly, to be willing to have my spiritual director, and if necessary the whole world, find out my littleness and vileness, and the small returns which I make for what I receive.

9. To these my protestations the most Holy Virgin answered: "My daughter, the world stands much in need of this doctrine, for it does not know, nor does it practice, the reverence due to the Lord omnipotent. On account of this ignorance his justice is provoked to afflict and humiliate men. They are sunken in their carelessness and filled with darkness, not knowing how to seek relief or attain to the light. This, however, is justly their lot, since they fail in the reverence and fear, which they ought to have." Besides this the Most High and the Queen gave me many other instructions, in order to make clear to me their will in regard to this work. It seemed to me temerity and want of charity toward myself, to reject the instruction which She had promised me for narrating the course of her most holy life. It seemed equally improper to put off the writing of it, since the Most High had intimated this as the fitting and opportune time, saying to me in this regard: "My daughter, when I sent my Onlybegotten, the world, with the exception of the few souls that served Me, was in worse condition than it ever had been since its beginning; for human nature is so imperfect that if it does not subject itself to the interior guidance of my light and to the fulfillment of the precepts of my ministers by sacrificing its own judgment and following Me, who am the way, the truth and

the life (John 14, 6), and by carefully observing my commandments in order not to lose my friendship, it will presently fall into the abyss of darkness and innumerable miseries, until it arrives at obstinacy in sin. From the creation and sin of the first man until I gave the law to Moses, men governed themselves according to their own inclinations and fell into many errors and sins (Rom. 8, 13). After having received the law, they again committed sin by not obeying it (John 7, 19) and thus they lived on, separating themselves more and more from truth and light and arriving at the state of complete forgetfulness. In fatherly love I sent them eternal salvation and a remedy for the incurable infirmities of human nature, thus justifying my cause. And just as I then chose the opportune time for the greater manifestation of my mercy, so I now select this time for showing toward them another very great favor. For now the hour has come and the opportune time to let men know the just cause of my anger, and they are now justly charged and convinced of their guilt. Now I will make manifest my indignation and exercise my justice and equity; I will show how well justified is my cause. In order that this may come to pass more speedily, and because it is now time that my mercy show itself more openly and because my love must not be idle, I will offer to them an opportune remedy, if they will but make use of it for returning again to my favor. Now, at this hour, when the world has arrived at so unfortunate a pass, and when, though the Word has become incarnate, mortals are more careless of their weal and seek it less; when the day of their transitory life passes swiftly at the setting of the sun of time; when the night of eternity is approaching closer and closer for the wicked and the day without a night is being born for the just; when the majority of

mortals are sinking deeper and deeper into the darkness of their ignorance and guilt, oppressing the just and mocking the children of God; when my holy and divine law is despised in the management of the iniquitous affairs of state, which are as hostile as they are contrary to my Providence; when the wicked least deserve my mercy; in these predestined times, I wish to open a portal for the just ones through which they can find access to my mercy; I wish to give them a light by which they can dispel the gloom that envelops the eyes of their minds. I wish to furnish them a suitable remedy for restoring them to my grace. Happy they who find it, and blessed they who shall appreciate its value, rich they who shall come upon this treasure, and blessed and very wise those who shall search into and shall understand its marvels and hidden mysteries. I desire to make known to mortals how much intercession of Her is worth, who brought restoration of life by giving mortal existence to the immortal God. As recompense I desire that they look upon the wonders wrought by my mighty arm in that pure Creature, as upon a mirror by which they can estimate their own ingratitude. I wish to make known to them much of that, which according to my high judgment is still hidden concerning the Mother of the Word."

10. "I have not revealed these mysteries in the primitive Church, because they are so great, that the faithful would have been lost in the contemplation and admiration of them at a time when it was more necessary to establish firmly the law of grace and of the Gospel. Although all mysteries of religion are in perfect harmony with each other, yet human ignorance might have suffered recoil and doubt at their magnitude, when faith in the Incarnation and Redemption and the precepts of the new law of the Gospel were yet in their beginnings.

On this same account the person of the incarnate Word said to his disciples at the last supper: "Many things have I to say to you; but you are not yet disposed to receive them" (John 6, 12). These words He addressed to all the world, for it was not yet capable of giving full obedience to the law of grace and full assent to the faith in the Son, much less was it prepared to be introduced into the mysteries of his Mother. But now, mankind has greater need for this manifestation, and this necessity urges Me to disregard their evil disposition. And if men would now seek to please Me by reverencing, believing, and studying the wonders, which are intimately connected with this Mother of Piety, and if they would all begin to solicit her intercession from their whole heart, the world would find some relief. I will not longer withhold from men this mystical City of refuge; describe and delineate it to them, as far as thy shortcomings allow. I do not intend that thy descriptions and declarations of the life of the Blessed Virgin shall be mere opinions or contemplations, but reliable truth. They that have ears to hear, let them hear. Let those who thirst come to the living waters and leave the dried-out cisterns; let those that are seeking for the light, follow it to the end. Thus speaks the Lord God Almighty!"

11. These are the words of the Most High on the occasion before mentioned. Obedient to the authority, which commands me, I will in the following chapter describe the manner in which I receive my information and enlightenment, and how I see the Lord. Thus complying with his orders, I will explain, once for all, the illuminations and the favors which are vouchsafed to me for this work and to which I will refer in the sequel of this history.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE LORD, IN THE STATE IN WHICH HE HAD PLACED ME, MANIFESTED TO ME THE MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

12. It seemed to me proper to preface this history with an explanatory chapter, describing and explaining once for all, as far as is given me and as far as I can, the manner in which the Lord manifested to me these wonders.

13. Ever since I have had the use of reason, I was conscious of especially one blessing, which in my estimation is the greatest of all those bestowed upon me by God's liberality; namely, a great and penetrating fear, lest I should lose Him. And this moved and urged me on to strive after the better and more secure way and to follow after it and implore it from the Lord day after day. He has wounded my flesh with the dart of fear of his judgments (Ps. 118, 120), and I live continually in the dreadful thought: Have I perhaps lost the friendship of the Most High or am I still in his friendship? My bread day and night have been the tears, which this fear has drawn from my eyes (Ps. 91, 4). On account of this dread, since it is more necessary than ever that the friends of the Lord should practice their virtues in secret and without ostentation, I have in these latter times begun to send up earnest and heartfelt prayers and petitions to the Lord, asking also the intercession of the Queen and Virgin, that I may be guided and led along the secure paths hidden from the eyes of men.

14. In answer to these repeated prayers the Lord said: "Do not fear, soul, nor afflict thyself; for I will give thee a state of mind and show thee a path of light and security, which only its Author himself could know of or even conceive. Whatever is exterior and dangerous shall leave thee today and thy treasure shall be altogether hidden. Take care of it on thy part and preserve it by a perfect life. I will direct thee toward a hidden path, unobstructed, unfailing and pure; walk thou in it." And presently I felt a change within me and a highly spiritualized state of mind. To my understanding was given a new light, which illuminated it and infused into it a knowledge of all things in God, and of his operations as they are in themselves and as they are known and seen by God, according to the measure of his communication. It is a knowledge of light, holy, sweet and pure, subtle, penetrating, sure and agile, causing love of good and hatred of evil. It is a breath of the power of God and an emanation of a most subtle light, which acts as a mirror for my understanding. Thus the higher faculties and the interior perception of my soul began to expand in their activity. For the Object, by means of the light which flashed from It, showed Itself to be infinite, though the perception of It remained limited and the understanding finite. It is a vision as it were of the Lord seated on a throne of great majesty, where, always within mortal limitation, I perceive his attributes distinctly. A veil, which seems like purest crystal intervenes, through which the wonderful attributes and perfections of God appear distinctly and clearly perceptible; yet this vision is not entire, immediate or intuitive, or entirely free from obstruction, but always comes through a medium, which is nothing else than this crystalline covering above mentioned. The perception of that which it covers is not

painful to the understanding, but is marvelous, because the mind is aware that what is perceived is infinite, and that the one who perceives is finite. The mind reposes in the hope of once possessing that which it perceives, and of once seeing the veil removed and the medium done away with, as soon as the soul shall have been freed from the mortality of the body (II Cor. 4, 6).

15. In this vision there are three different ways or degrees, according to the different methods, by which the divine Will communicates it and according to the dispositions of the human will. Sometimes He manifests Himself more clearly, at other times less. At times some mysteries are revealed to the exclusion of others of great importance. This difference is usually in accordance with the dispositions of the soul; for if the soul does not preserve itself in peace or if it is guilty of some fault, no matter how small, it will not experience this vision in its fullness. In the one I have described the Lord is perceived so plainly and so securely, that there is not the least room for doubt. However, the conviction of the real presence of God in the vision always precedes and impresses itself upon the mind, before one understands fully that which his Majesty speaks. And this knowledge produces a pleasing constraint, powerfully and efficaciously urging the soul onward to love, serve, and obey the Most High. In this vision great truths are made clear; how estimable virtue is, and what a valuable treasure is its exercise and preservation. The beauty and security of virtue is exhibited and a powerful impulse given toward the good, while a hatred and disgust toward evil and all disorderly inclinations fills the soul, very often entirely subduing them. As long as the soul enjoys this vision and does not lose it, it will never be conquered (Wis. 7, 30), because it gives life, security, fervor and

joy. Strongly and lovingly it calls and urges the soul onward, gives it lightness and alertness, and establishes the superior part of the being firmly above the inferior. Even the body becomes agile and spiritualized during such times, freeing itself from its grossness and weight.

16. And beginning to perceive and feel these delightful sensations, the soul lovingly calls out to the Most High: "Trahe me post Te" (Cant. 1, 3) let us run together; for, united to its Beloved, it does not any more feel the doings of this earthly life. Seeking to fly after the odor of the ointments of its Beloved, it begins to live more where it loves, than where it lives. Having already left behind its lower nature, it turns back only for the purpose of reforming it and curtailing its animal appetites of the passions. If at any time they seek to rise in rebellion, the soul will subdue them with alacrity, for already "not I live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20).

17. To a certain extent, in all these holy operations and aspirations, is felt the assistance of the spirit of Christ, who is the God and the life of the soul (John 5, 11) and who is known as such by the fervor, by the enlightenment, by the holy desires, by the light, and by the facility of action inspired by Him. These are such, that only God can be the Author of them. One feels the uninterrupted activity of love which it causes, and of intimate conversation with God, living and continuous, which rivets the attention of the mind to the things of God and withdraws it from earthly things. Christ manifests Himself as living within the soul, exerting his power and dispersing the darkness by his light. This may be properly designated as standing in the entrance of the house of the Lord; for there the soul beholds the splendor emanating from the beaconlight of the Lamb of God (Apoc. 21, 23).

18. I do not say that this is the whole light, but it is part of it; and it consists in a knowledge superior to the capabilities and faculties of a creature. In furtherance of this vision the Most High animates the intellect by a certain subtlety and light, thus adapting it for the exalted knowledge. Moreover the knowledge thus given is accompanied by the certainty which is peculiar to faith, as experienced in regard to the more common truths of revelation. Faith accompanies the vision and the Omnipotent gives to the soul power to appreciate the value of the knowledge and the light, which He infuses. Its light is inextinguishable (Wis. 7, 10) and all good things and a nobility of great price come to me with it. This light goes before me, directing my ways (Wis. 8, 16) and I took possession of it unerringly, and I desired to communicate it without envy, nor have I concealed its excellence. It is a participation of the Divinity and its presence is a great delight and joy. It teaches great things freely and it disciplines the heart; with irresistible force it banishes and expels the deceitful things of this world, wherein, solely by looking upon them in this light, the spirit finds immeasurable bitterness. By it the soul leaves behind the perishable things and flies to the sacred refuge of eternal truths. It enters into the cellar of fermented wine (Cant. 2, 4) where the Most High orders in me most holy charity. And by it He urges me to be patient and without envy (I Cor. 13, 4), to be kind without offense, to be free from pride and ambition or anger, thinking ill of nobody and suffering and tolerating all things. Its voice is ever within me (Prov. 8, 1) and secretly warns me powerfully to do what is most holy and most pure, teaching me in all things; and if I fall short in the slightest degree, it reprehends me without ever passing over the smallest point.

19. This is the light, which at one and at the same time enlightens, raises to fervor, teaches and reprehends, chastens and enlivens, calls and deters, warns and compels, makes clear the distinction between good and evil, discloses the hidden and the profound, the length and the breadth (Eph. 3, 18); which reveals to me the world, its state, its inclinations, its deceits and the lies and fallacies of its lovers and clients. Above all, it teaches me to despise the world, to tread it under foot and to raise myself to the highest Lord and Governor of the universe. And in his Majesty I see and learn the ordering of all things (Wis. 7, 17), the power of the elements, the beginning, the middle and the end of time, its changes and variations, the onward course of the years, the harmony of all creatures and their innate qualities; all the secrets of men, their acts and their thoughts; how far they stray from the Lord; the dangers in which they live and the errors of their ways; the states and governments, their curtailed existence and their great instability, their beginning and their end, the true and the false principles which guide them. All this is learnt and seen distinctly in God through this light, even as far as pertains to the separate individuals and circumstances. But as soon as the soul descends to a lower condition and a more ordinary state, wherein it must make use only of the substance or acquired habit of this enlightenment and cannot enjoy its full splendor, this exalted knowledge of persons, of conditions, and of the secret thoughts before described is more circumscribed and limited. In this lower state I perceive only so much as is necessary to avoid danger and fly from sin, and to feel true compassion with other persons, though at the same time I am not permitted to speak clearly with any one about that which is revealed to me of their evil state. I could not do it if I tried, for

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it seems as if I am made dumb, except at times, when the Author of this light gives me permission and commands me to admonish one of my neighbors. But even on such occasions I must not disclose the nature of my cognition, but I am constrained to speak to the heart, using plain arguments, simple, ordinary and charitable persuasion in God. At the same time I am urged to pray for their necessities, which for that object become known to me.

20. Although all these things were revealed to me with the greatest clearness, yet never has the Lord shown me the final ruin of any soul, which has damned itself. This knowledge is withheld from me by the providence of God, because He is so just, that He does not deem it befitting to reveal the damnation of a soul except for some great purpose; and if I were to come to the knowledge of such a great ruin, I think I should die of sorrow. This would doubtlessly be the effect of such a revelation, so great is the grief caused by the sight of a soul forever separated from God. I have besought Him not to show me any one who will damn himself. I would not refuse, at the cost of my life, to liberate any one who is in sin, nor would I object even to see the present state of such soul; but may I never see one, who is beyond redemption!

21. This light is given me, not that I may reveal my secrets in particular, but that I may make use of it with prudence and wisdom. Though it continues to be only accidental, it remains with me in the same way as some substance, that vivifies and comes from God himself; and in the manner of a habit, to insure the good government of my lower appetites and feelings. Moreover, in the superior part of my soul, I enjoy a vision and habitation of peace and I understand the mysteries and sacraments of the life of the Queen of heaven and of other mysteries of faith, which were thus continually made manifest and

present to me in this never failing light. And if at any time I descend, creaturelike, to attend to human affairs, the Lord presently calls me with a sweet yet rigorous severity and again draws my attention to his words and teachings and to the conscious meditation of these sacraments, graces and virtues, and to the exterior and interior works of the Virgin Mother, as I will explain farther on.

22. Thus, when in the state of enlightenment aforesaid, I see also and recognize the same Queen and Lady as She speaks with me; also the holy angels, their nature and excellence. Sometimes I see and recognize them in the Lord, at other times I see them in themselves; but with this difference that in seeing them in themselves, I descend to a lower grade of knowledge. I perceive also this difference, which results from the object and from the kind of knowledge. In this lower degree of vision I see, speak and listen to the holy princes; they converse with me and explain many of the mysteries, which the Lord has shown me. The Queen of heaven likewise manifests and propounds to me the mysteries of her most holy life and of its admirable events. With great clearness I recognize each one of these holy persons, feeling the divine effects, which each one excites in the soul.

23. But when I see these same persons in the Lord, I perceive them as through a mirror placed freely by His Majesty, in which He shows to me the saints according to his pleasure, with great clearness and producing most exalted effects in my soul. For this admirable light, the Lord himself becomes known, as also the Saints and their excellent virtues and wonderful works; likewise the manner in which they exercised these virtues by the help of the graces, that made them capable of all this (Philip 4, 13). In this state of knowledge the creature is more

abundantly and completely filled with a joy, that still further increases the power and satisfaction of the soul, and poises it as if on its center of gravity. For, the more intellectual and the less corporeal or imaginary the light, so much the more powerful and exalted are the effects, and so much the more substantial and certain is the knowledge attained. Yet also here there is a difference: for the vision or knowledge of God himself, of his attributes and his perfections is superior and its effects are most sweet and affable; while the vision and knowledge of the creatures, even in the Lord, is of an inferior order. This inferiority, it seems to me, arises in part from the soul itself; since its own vision is so limited, that it cannot attend to or perceive God so well, when seeing Him conjointly with creatures, as when seeing Him by Himself and without them. Also this vision of God by Himself is accompanied by a greater plenitude of joy than the vision of creatures in God. So delicate is this cognition of the Divinity, that to attend to any other thing in conjunction with it, impairs to a certain extent its clearness, at least so long as we shall be in our mortal state.

24. In the inferior state, which I have mentioned, I see the most holy virgin and the angels in themselves and their mode of teaching me, speaking to me, and enlightening me. I understand this to be similar to the mode in which the angels themselves enlighten, communicate and speak with each other, when the superior orders enlighten the inferior. The Lord is the first cause of this light, but the Queen who has received it in its highest plenitude, communicates it as through a channel to the superior part of my soul, so that I begin to know her excellence, her prerogatives and mysteries in the same manner as an inferior angel perceives that, which is com-

municated to him by the superior spirits. I recognize Her also by the doctrine which She teaches, by the efficacy peculiar to it, and by other qualities, which are felt and tasted and which indicate the purity, elevation and certainty of these visions. There, nothing impure, or obscure, or false, or suspected is met with; and nothing that is holy, pure and true is withheld from view. The same happens to me in its proper proportion, when conversing with the holy angels; for the Lord himself has often informed me, that they enlighten and communicate with me in the same manner as they converse with each other. Often it happens that the enlightenments pass through all these channels and conduits in succession: the Lord gives the intelligence or light, the most holy Virgin reveals it to me and the angels express it to me in words. At other times (and this is the most ordinary mode) the Lord communicates and teaches me his holy doctrine, sometimes the most holy Queen, and sometimes the holy angels. It also happens, that I receive only the understanding of things, and then I am left to find for myself the terms which befit that which I hold in the intelligence. In finding these terms I may err, if the Lord allows, for I am only an ignorant woman and I must rely on what I have heard. If any difficulties arise in the explanation of my visions, I take counsel with my master and spiritual guide, especially in more difficult and arduous matters.

25. In this condition and state I very seldom see corporeal visions, but imaginary visions I see sometimes; these are of a much lower grade than the exalted, more spiritual, or intellectual vision, of which I have until now spoken. But this I can assert with confidence: in all the spiritual enlightenments, which I receive, great and small, lower or higher, whether they come from the Lord, the

most blessed Virgin, or the holy angels, in all of them I obtain most abundant light and help of salvation, enabling me to see and know the truth and the possibility of greater perfection and sanctity. I feel within me a divine force, which compels me to seek the greater purity of my soul, and advancement in the grace of the Lord, which makes me ready to die for it and to act in all things according to greater perfection. With the help of the different grades and kinds of intelligence already described, I learn to know all the mysteries of the life of the Queen of heaven to the great advancement and rejoicing of my spirit. For this I thank the Almighty with my whole heart and mind, I magnify Him, I adore and praise Him as the all powerful and holy God, strong and admirable, worthy of honor, magnificence, glory and reverence through all the ages. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINITY, WHICH WAS CONFERRED UPON ME, AND OF THE DECREE OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

26. O King, most high and most wise Lord: How incomprehensible are thy judgments, and inscrutable thy ways (Rom. 11, 24)! Invincible God, enduring forever and whose beginning is unknown (Eccli. 18, 1)! Who can understand thy greatness and who can be worthy of thy most magnificent works, or who can tell Thee why Thou hast created them (Rom. 9, 20)? For Thou art exalted above all of them and our vision cannot reach Thee and our understanding cannot comprehend Thee. Mayest Thou be blest, magnificent King, because Thou has deigned to show me, thy slave and a vile worm of the earth, great sacraments and most sublime mysteries, exalting my habitation and raising my spirit to a height, in which I saw things unspeakable. I saw the Lord and Creator of all things; I perceived as it were the exaltedness of a Being existing in Itself, before It created any other thing; I do not know the manner in which It showed Itself to me, but I know what I saw and perceived. His Majesty, comprehending all things, is aware that, while I am speaking of his Deity, my thoughts stand still, my soul is troubled, my faculties cease their operations, and the superior part of my being deserts the lower and animal parts, despises that which is of the senses and flies toward its Beloved, leaving lifeless the body which it should keep alive. In these excursions and aban-

donments of love my eyes flow over in tears and my tongue becomes mute. O my most high and incomprehensible Lord, infinite Object of my understanding! How am I annihilated at the sight of Thee, the Measureless and the Eternal, and how my being grovels in the dust, scarcely knowing what I am! How can my insignificance and misery dare to admire thy magnificence and thy great majesty? Vivify, O Lord, my being; strengthen my vision and give the breath of life to my fear, so that I may be able to describe what I saw and thus obey thy command.

27. I saw the Most High, at the same time understanding how his Majesty is in Himself; I received a clear intelligence and a true perception of what is meant by a God, infinite in his substance and attributes, eternal, exalted above all, being three in Person, and one true God. Three in Person, because of the three activities of knowing, comprehending and loving each other; one, so as to secure the boon of eternal unity. It is the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Father is not made, nor created, nor begotten, nor can He be generated or have a beginning. I perceived, that the Son derives his origin from the Father alone by eternal generation; and that They are equal in their duration from eternity; and that He is begotten by the fecundity of the intelligence of the Father. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son through love. In their indivisible Trinity there is nothing which can be called first or last, greater or smaller: all three Persons are equally eternal and eternally equal; there is unity of essence in a trinity of persons. Nor are the Persons mingled in order to form one God, nor the divine substance separated or divided in order to form three Persons, being distinct as the Father, as the Son and as the

Holy Ghost. They are nevertheless one and the same Divinity, equal in Each is the glory, and majesty, the power, the eternity, the immensity, the wisdom and sanctity, and all the attributes. And though there are three Persons, in whom these infinite perfections subsist, He is the one and true God, the Holy, the Just, the Powerful, the Eternal and the Measureless.

28. I also obtained an understanding of the manner in which this Trinity comprehends Itself by simple vision, so that no new or distinct cognition is necessary: the Father knows that, which is known to the Son, and the Son and the Holy Ghost know that which is in the intelligence of the Father. I understood how they love One another with one and the same immense and eternal love; how there is a single, indivisible and equal oneness of intelligence, love and action, how there is one simple, incorporeal and indivisible nature, a divine essence of the true God, in which are joined and united all the perfections in their highest and in an infinite degree.

29. I learnt also to understand the quality of these perfections of the highest Lord: that He is beautiful without a blemish, great without quantity, good without need of qualification, eternal without the duration of time, strong without any weakness, living without touch of decay, true without deceit, present in all places, filling them without occupying them, existing in all things without occupying any space. There is no contradiction in his kindness, nor any defect in his wisdom. In his wisdom He is inscrutable, in his decrees He is terrible, in his judgments just, in his thoughts most hidden, in his words most true, in his works holy, in his riches affluent. To Him no space is too wide, no narrowness causes restraint, his will does not vary, the sorrowful does not cause Him pain, the past has not passed for Him, nor

does the future happen in regard to Him. O eternal Immensity, what illimitable expansion have I seen in Thee? What vastness do I see in thy infinite Being? Vision does not terminate, nor ever exhaust itself in thy abyss of being. This is the unchangeable Essence, the Being above all other beings, the most perfect sanctity, the most constant truth; this is the infinite, the length, the breadth, the height and the depth, glory and its cause, rest without fatigue, goodness immeasurable. All this I saw at the same time, but the power to describe it more fully fails me.

30. I saw the Lord as He was before He had created anything and with great astonishment I looked to see where was the throne of the Most High, for the empyrean heavens were not, nor the lower ones, nor did the sun exist, nor the moon, nor the other stars, nor the elements, only the Creator was, without any of his creatures. All was void, without presence of angels, or men or animals. I saw how of necessity it must be admitted, that God has his being in Himself, and that He stands in want or need of none of the created things. For He is as infinite in his attributes before as He is after creating them, and He will possess and hold these attributes during the whole of eternity, because they exist in Him as in an independent increated Essence. No perfection which is in itself purely and essentially such, can be wanting to his Divinity: for the Godhead is the only thing that is, and contains all the perfection of created beings in an eminent and ineffable manner. All the other beings, in so far as they exist, have their existence solely in that infinite Being, as effects in their cause.

31. I understood, that the Most High was in the quiescent state of his own being, when the three Persons

(according to our way of understanding things), decreed to communicate his perfections as a free gift. For greater clearness, I must remark, that God comprehends in Himself all things by one indivisible, most simple and instantaneous act. He does not go on from the understanding of one thing to the understanding of another like we do, distinguishing and perceiving first one thing by an act of the understanding, and after that proceeding to the knowledge of others by their connection with those already known. God knows them conjointly all at once, without before or after, since all are together and at once contained in the divine and uncreated knowledge and science, just as they are comprehended and enclosed in his infinite Being, as in their first beginning.

32. In this knowledge of God, which primarily is called the knowledge of pure intelligence (scientia simplicis intelligentiæ), we must, according to the natural precedence of the intelligence before the will, not overlook a certain succession, not indeed of time, but of nature. Hence we perceive that the act of intelligence preceded by its nature the act of the will For in our way of reflecting on things, we think of the act of intelligence by itself, abstractedly from the decree of wishing to create anything. In this first stage or instant the three Persons through an act of intelligence confirmed the opportuneness of the work *ad extra* and of all creatures, which have been, are, and are to be.

33. Though I am unworthy to know the order which He followed, or which we, as men, are enabled to perceive in the decree of creation, his Majesty nevertheless deigned to take notice of a request, which I made in this regard. I petitioned Him to make known to me the place which was held by the Mother of God and our

Queen in the divine intelligence; and, as well as I can, I will state what He answered me and manifested to me and I will also say something of the order which I perceived by the help of God in these ideas. I divide them according to moments or instants, for it is impossible to accommodate the knowledge of this divine science to our capacity in any other way. This science is called the *science of vision,* constituting the divine ideas or images of the creatures, which God decreed to call into existence and which are a production of his mind. By them He knows creatures with an infinitely more precise knowledge, than we can ever have of them.

34. Although this divine knowledge is one, most simple and indivisible, nevertheless, since the things which I see are many, and since there is a certain order, by which some are first and some come after, it is necessary to divide the knowledge of God's intelligence and the knowledge of his will into many instants, or into many different acts, according as they correspond to the diverse orders of created things. For as some of the creatures hold their existence because of others, there is a dependence of one upon the other. Accordingly we say that God intended and decreed this before that, the one on account of the other; and that if He had not desired or included in the science of vision the one, He would not have desired the other. But by this way of speaking, we must not try to convey the meaning that God placed many acts of intelligence, or of the will; rather we must intend merely to indicate, that the creatures are dependent on each other and that they succeed one another. In order to be able to comprehend the manner of creation more easily, we apply the order of things as we see them objectively, to the acts of the divine intelligence and will in creating them.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE DIVINE DECREES ARE CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO INSTANTS, AND WHAT GOD IN EACH DETERMINED TO COMMUNICATE AD EXTRA.

35. I understood, that this order comprises the following instants. The first instant is: God recognizing his infinite attributes and perfections together with the propensity and the ineffable inclination to communicate Himself outwardly. This knowledge of God as being communicative *ad extra* comes first. The Majesty of God, beholding the nature of his infinite perfections, their virtue and efficacy operating with magnificence, saw that it was just and most proper, and, as it were, a duty and a necessity, to communicate Himself and to follow that inclination of imparting and exercising his liberality and mercy, by distributing outside of Himself with magnificence the plenitude of the infinite treasures, contained in the Divinity. For, being infinite in all things, it is much more natural that He communicate gifts and graces, than that fire should ascend, or the stone should gravitate toward its center, or that the sun should diffuse its light. This unfathomable depth of perfections, this affluence of treasures, this impetuous infinity of riches, is set in motion by its own inclinations to communicate itself. At the same time God is in Himself conscious that to distribute gifts and graces, is not to diminish his riches, but to increase them in the only possible way, by giving an outlet to the inexhaustible fountain of his riches.

36. All this did God see in the first instant after the communication *ad intra* by means of the eternal emanations. Seeing this He found Himself, as it were, obliged, in Himself, to communicate Himself *ad extra,* perceiving that it was holy, just, merciful, and god-like to do so; hence nothing could impede Him. According to our mode of understanding, we can represent God to our minds as not being satisfied nor at rest with Himself until He reached the object of his desires, the creatures, where and with whom, by making them partakers of his divinity and perfections, He seeks his delight.

37. In this enlightenment and knowledge which I possess, two things hold my lukewarm heart in wonder and inflame it unto annihilation. The first is the inclination and urgent desire, which I see in God, and the strong will, to communicate his Divinity and the treasures of his grace. The second is the unspeakable and incomprehensible immensity of the good gifts, which I see He wishes to distribute according to this decree, assigning them for this purpose and yet remaining infinite, as if He had yet given nothing. In this desire and inclination, which fills his Majesty I see Him prepared to sanctify, justify, overwhelm with gifts and perfections all creatures together and each one in particular for itself. He would be ready to give to each of the creatures more than what is held by all the angels and seraphim together; even if all the drops in the ocean and the grains of sand on their shores, all the stars, the planets and the elements, and all creatures were capable of reason and of his gifts, they would receive them without measure, provided they would dispose themselves and place no obstacle toward receiving them. O fearful malice of sin, which alone is capable of holding up the impetuous stream of such great and eternal gifts!

38. The second instant was to confirm and determine the object and intention of this communication of the Divinity *ad extra,* namely, that it should redound to his greater glory and to the exaltation of his Majesty and the manifestation of his greatness. This his own exaltation God saw as the end, for which He would communicate Himself, make Himself known by his liberality in the distribution of his attributes, and set in motion his Omnipotence in order that He might be known, praised and glorified.

39. The third instant consisted in selecting and determining the order and arrangement, or the mode of this communication, so as to realize in an adequate manner the most exalted ends The order namely, which it is proper should be maintained in regard to the communications of the Godhead and its divine attributes; so that this activity of the Lord may have its proper reasons and objects, and so that it might proceed with the most beautiful and admirable sequence, harmony and subordination. In this instant was decreed first of all, that the divine Word should assume flesh and should become visible. The perfection and the composition of the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord was decreed and modeled in the divine intelligence. Secondarily, also were formed the ideals of the rest of men in imitation of the First The divine mind prearranged the harmony and adornment of the human nature composed of an organic body and a vivifying soul, endowed with faculties to know and enjoy its Creator, to discern between good and evil, and with a free will to love that same Lord.

40. This hypostatic union of the second Person of the most holy Trinity I understood necessarily to have been the first incentive and object on account of which, before

all others, the divine intelligence and will issued *ad extra;* and the reasons are most exalted, so that I cannot explain. One of these reasons is, that God, having in Himself known and loved Himself, should, according to right order, know and love that, which approaches most intimately to his Divinity, as is the case in the hypostatic union. Another reason is, that the Divinity, having communicated Itself *ad intra,* should also communicate Itself *ad extra;* for thus the divine will and intention would begin to execute its works with the highest end in view, and his attributes would be communicated in the most beautiful order. The fire of the Divinity expended itself in its fullest measure on that which was most immediately connected with It, namely, the hypostatically united humanity; and his Divinity communicated Itself in the highest and most excellent degree to Him, who was to be closest to God in divine knowledge and love, and share the works and the glory of the Deity. For God (speaking according to our lowly comprehension) could not endanger the attainment of this end, since He alone could be an object proportionate and worthy of so wonderful an operation. It was also befitting and, as it were, necessary, that if God should create many creatures, He should create them in such harmony and subordination, as would be the most admirable and glorious within the reach of possibility. In conformity with this therefore, they must be subordinate to a supreme Chief, who should be as far as possible united immediately with God, so that through Him they may have communication and connection with his Divinity. For these and for other reasons (which I cannot explain), the dignity of the works of God could be provided for only by the Incarnation of the Word; through Him Creation should possess the most beautiful order, which without Him was impossible.

41. The fourth instant was to determine the gifts and graces, which were to be conferred upon the humanity of Christ, our Lord, in union with the Divinity. Here the Most High opened the liberal hands of his Omnipotence and his other attributes, in order to enrich the most sacred humanity and the soul of Christ with the highest possible plenitude of his gifts and graces. Then was fulfilled what afterward David said: "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. 45, 5). When the stream of his gifts flowed toward the humanity of the Word, communicating to it all the infused science, the grace and goodness of which his blessed soul was capable, and which fitted that Being, which was to be God and true man, and at the same time, the Head of all creatures capable of grace and glory, in order that from this impetuous stream they might partake in the manner in which it afterwards really happened.

42. To this instant also, and, as it were, in natural sequence, pertain the decree and predestination of the Mother of the Divine Word incarnate; for here, I understand, was ordained that pure Creature before aught else whatever. Thus, before all other creatures, was She conceived in the divine mind, in such manner and such state as befitted and became the dignity, excellence and gifts of the humanity of her most holy Son. To Her flowed over, at once and immediately, the river of the Divinity and its attributes with all its impetuosity, in as far as a mere creature is capable and as is due to the dignity of the Mother of God.

43. In the knowledge of these exalted mysteries and decrees, I confess myself ravished in admiration and transported beyond my proper self. Perceiving this most holy and pure Creature formed and conceived in the divine mind from the beginning and before all the ages, I

joyously and exultingly magnify the Omnipotent for the admirable and mysterious decree, by which He formed for us such a pure and grand, such a mysterious and godlike Creature, worthy rather to be admired and praised by all beings, than to be described by any one. In my admiration I can say with St. Dionysius the Areopagite: "If faith would not instruct me, and if the understanding of what I see would not teach me, that it is God, who has conceived Her in his mind, and who alone could and can in his Omnipotence form such an image of his Divinity, if this all were not present to my mind, I might begin to doubt, whether the Virgin Mother contain not in Herself Divinity."

44. O what tears flowed from my eyes, and what sorrowful astonishment possessed my soul, to see that divine prodigy not acknowledged and that wonder of the Most High not manifest to all the mortals. Much is known of it, but much more is unknown, as this sealed book has not been opened. I am ravished in the perception of this tabernacle of God, and I perceive that the Author of it is more admirable in her creation, than in that of all the rest of the world, although the diversity of the creatures manifests the wonderful power of their Creator. In this Queen alone are comprehended and contained more treasures than in all the rest of things joined together, and the variety and the preciousness of her riches honor the Lord above all the multitudes of the other creatures.

45. Here (according to our way of understanding) the promise and, as it were, the contract was made with the Word as to the degree of sanctity, and perfection and the gifts and graces, which were to be possessed by Mary his Mother. Also as to the protection, support and defense, which was to be provided for this true City of God, in which his Majesty contemplated the graces and

merits, which She earned for Herself, as well as the fruits to be gathered for his people by the loving returns, which She was to make to his Majesty. In the same instant, and as it were in the third and last place, God determined to create a locality and an abode, where the incarnate Word and his Mother should converse and dwell. For Them primarily did He create the heaven and earth with its stars and elements and all that is contained in them. Secondarily the intention and decree included the creation of the members, of which Jesus was to be the Head, and of whom He would be the King; in order that with kingly providence, all the necessary and befitting arrangements might be made beforehand.

46. I pass over to the fifth instant, although in reality I have found that, which I sought. In this fifth decree the creation of the angelic nature which is more excellent and more like unto the spiritual being of the Divinity, was determined upon, and at the same time the division or arrangement of the angelic hosts into nine choirs and three hierarchies, was provided and decreed. As they are created first of all for the glory of God, to assist before his divine Majesty and to know and love Him, so secondarily they are ordained to assist, glorify and honor, reverence and serve the deified humanity of the eternal Word, recognizing Him as Head, and honoring Him also in his Mother, the most holy Mary, Queen of these same angels. Commission was given to these angels, "to bear them up in their hands" in all their ways (Ps. 90, 12). In this instant Christ our Lord earned for them by his infinite merits, present and foreseen, all the grace, which they were to receive. He was constituted as their Head, Exemplar and supreme King, of whom they should be subjects. Even if the number of angels had been infinite, the merits of Christ our highest Good, would be abundantly sufficient to supply them all with grace.

47. To this instant belongs also the predestination of the good, and the reprobation of the bad angels. God saw in it, by means of his infinite science, all the works of the former and of the latter and the propriety of predestinating, by his free will and by his merciful liberality, those that would obey and give honor, and of reprobating by his justice those who would rise up against his Majesty in pride and disobedience on account of their disordered selflove. In the same instant also was decreed the creation of the empyrean heaven, for the manifestation of his glory and the reward of the good; also the earth and other heavenly bodies for the other creatures; moreover also in the center or depth of the earth, hell, for the punishment of the bad angels.

48. In the sixth instant was decreed the creation of a people and congregation of men for Christ, who was already formed in the divine mind and will, and according to whose image and likeness man was to be made, in order, that the incarnate Word might find brethren, similar but inferior to Himself and a people of his own nature, of whom He might be the Head. In this instant was determined the order of the creation of the whole human race, which was to begin from one man and woman and propagate itself, until the Virgin and her Son should be born in the predestined order. On account of the merits of Christ, our Savior, the graces and gifts were prearranged, and also original justice, if they would only preserve it. The fall of Adam was foreseen and in him that of all others, except of the Queen, who did not enter into this decree. As a remedy was it ordained, that the most holy humanity should be capable of suffering. The predestined were chosen by free grace, and the foreknown were reprobated with exact justice. All that was convenient and necessary for the conservation of the

human race and for obtaining the end of the Redemption and the Predestination, was preordained, without interfering with the free will of men; for such ordainment was more conformable to God's nature and to divine equity. There was no injustice done to them, for if with their free will they could sin, so also could they abstain from sin by means of grace and the light of reason. God violated the right of no one, since He forsook no one nor denied to any one that which is necessary. Since his law is written in the hearts of men, nobody is excused for not knowing and loving Him as the highest Good of all creation.

49. In the perception of these mysteries I saw with great clearness and force the high motives which caused God to manifest and magnify Himself and which should induce men to praise and adore the greatness of the Creator and Redeemer of all. I also saw how tardy they are in the acknowledgment of these obligations and in making return for these benefits; and I was made aware of the complaints and the indignation of the Most High on account of this forgetfulness. His Majesty commanded and exhorted me not to be guilty of such ingratitude, but to offer Him a sacrifice of praise, and a new song, and that I magnify Him in the name of all creatures.

50. O most high and incomprehensible Lord! Would that I had the love and the perfections of all the angels and the just in order to confess and praise worthily thy greatness! I acknowledge, great and mighty Lord, that such a vile creature as I cannot merit the memorable benefit of receiving this clear and exalted knowledge and light concerning thy exalted Majesty. At the sight of thy greatness I perceive my littleness, which before that happy hour was unknown to me; and I was ignorant of

the greatness and excellence of the virtue of humility, which is learnt in this science. I do not wish to say that I now possess that virtue, but neither can I deny that I have been shown the certain path which leads to it. Thy light, O most high Lord, illumines me and thy lamp shows me the paths (Ps. 118, 105), so that I see what I have been and what I am, and fear what I may become to be. Thou hast lighted up, most high King, my understanding and inflamed my will with its most exalted object. Thou hast entirely drawn me on to seek Thee, and I wish to make this known to all mortals in order that they may leave me in peace and I them: I am for my Beloved (Cant. 2, 16), and (although I am unworthy), my Beloved is for me. Strengthen then, O Lord, my weakness that I may run after Thee, and reaching Thee, I may never leave Thee or lose Thee.

51. Very short and stammering is this chapter, for of this matter many books could be written; but I refrain, because I do not know how to speak and I am an ignorant woman. My sole object has been to explain, how the Virgin Mother has been formed and preordained in the divine mind before the ages (Ecclus. 24, 14). That which I have seen over and above concerning this highest mystery, transforms my interior, and in silent admiration makes me praise the Author of such magnificence in company with the blessed, saying: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Sabaoth (Is. 6, 3).

CHAPTER V.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND IN PARTICULAR CONCERNING CHAPTER EIGHT OF THE PROVERBS, IN CONFIRMATION OF THE PRECEDING PAGES.

52. I will converse, O Lord, with Thy great Majesty, since Thou art the God of mercies, though I am only dust and ashes (Gen. 18, 17), and I will supplicate thy incomprehensible Immensity to look from thy exalted throne upon me, thy most vile and useless creature, and to be propitious to me by continuing to enlighten my understanding. Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth (I Reg. 3, 10). Then the Most High, the Corrector of the wise, spoke to me (Sap. 7, 15). He referred me to the eighth chapter of the Proverbs and gave me the understanding of its mysteries. First was given me the literal wording of the chapter, which is as follows (Prov. 8, 22):

53. Verse 22. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways before He made anything from the beginning."

23. "I was set up from eternity and of old, before the earth was made."

24. "The depths were not as yet and I was already conceived: neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out."

25. "The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth."

26. "He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the earth."

27. "When He prepared the heavens, I was present: when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths."

28. "When He established the sky above and poised the fountains of the waters."

29. "When He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits: when He balanced the foundations of the earth."

30. "I was with Him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before Him all the times."

31. "Playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men."

54. This is the portion of the Proverbs, of which the Most High gave me an understanding. I understood at first, that it treats of the ideas or decrees, which were in the Divine Mind before the Creation of the world; and that, in its literal sense, it speaks of the Person of the Incarnate Word and of his most holy Mother, while in its mystical sense it refers to the holy angels and prophets. For before decreeing or forming the ideals of the rest of the material creation, He formed and decreed their prototype, the most sacred humanity of Christ and of his purest Mother, and this is indicated by the first words.

55. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways." In God there are no ways, and his Divinity does not need them: but He made use of them, in order, that by them we may know Him and that all of us creatures, who are capable of knowing Him, may tend toward Him. In this beginning, before He formed any other ideal in

his mind, because He desired to create paths and open ways in his mind for the communication of the Divinity, He decreed, as a beginning, the formation of the humanity of the Word, who was to be the highway, by which the other creatures might come to the Father (Joan. 14, 6). Joined with this decree was that of his most holy Mother, through whom his Divinity was to enter into the world, becoming man and being born from Her as God and man; therefore it is said: "God possessed me" since both were possessed by his Majesty: for as to his Divinity, He was the possession, the property, and the treasure of the Father without possibility of separation, because Father and Son are One, of the same substance and Divinity with the Holy Ghost; and also as to his humanity, the Father possessed the Son; because He himself knew and decreed the plenitude of grace and glory, which He was to bestow upon it at the moment of its creation and its hypostatical union. Moreover, as this decree and possession was to be brought about by the mediation of the Mother, who was to conceive and bring forth the Word (since He did not decide to create it out of nothing, nor form his soul and body out of any other material), it followed that He possessed Her, who was to give Him the human form. Thus He possessed and claimed Her as his own in the same instant, providing with solicitude, that in the order of grace neither the human race nor any other, should have at any time a right or a part in Her. He alone retained the full right in Her as his portion, and so much his portion as the dignity of Mother required. She alone was to call Him Son, and She alone was to be called Mother, a Mother worthy of having an incarnate God for a Son. Now as all this far surpassed in dignity the whole creation, so did it also take the precedence in the mind of the supreme Creator. Hence He says:

56. "Before He made anything from the beginning, I was set up from eternity and of old." We, in our present state, conceive this eternity of God as an interminable time. But what were the things "of old," since none had been created? It is clear that the three Persons are here spoken of, namely, that She was foreseen from the eternal ages of the Divinity, by the Beings, which alone are ancient, namely, the indivisible Trinity (since all the rest, having a beginning, are recent), that She was foreseen when only the ancient Uncreated was, and before any ideals of the future creation were formed. Between these two extremes intervened the ideal of the hypostatic union which was to be verified *ad extra* through the intervention of most holy Mary. Both were ordained together, immediately next to God and before any other creature, and it was the most wonderful decree ever passed or ever to be passed. The first and most admirable image in the mind of God, next to the eternal generation, was that of Christ and next to it, that of his Mother.

57. And what other order could there be in God, in whom all that pertains to Him is present at one and the same time, so that no part of His being must await the perfection of another, or one perfection ever need succeed upon others? All is well ordered in his eternal nature, and so it was and will be forever. The new ordainment, however, was that the person of the Son should become incarnate and that from his deified humanity should begin the order of God's desires and of his decrees *ad extra*. He was to be the Head and Ideal of all other men and creatures; for this was the most appropriate order and harmony to be instituted among creatures, that they have One, who is the first and the highest, and that from Him should descend the order of all

nature, and in a special manner, of the mortals. First among them all, however, was the Mother of the Man-God, as the Supreme among mere creatures, following immediately upon Christ, and, through Him, upon the Divinity. Thus the conduits, which led the crystalline fountains of the Divinity from the eternal throne, meet first in the humanity of the Word and immediately thereafter in his holy Mother in the degree and in the manner, as it was possible for a mere creature, and as it was proper for the Mother of the Creator. It was equitable, that all the divine attributes should exert themselves in Her, without reserve, so far as She was capable; and that She be inferior only to Christ our Lord. She was to be superior in the degree of his incomparable graces to all the rest of the creatures, that are deserving of graces and gifts. This then was the order, so well instituted by the eternal wisdom: that all was to commence with Christ and his Mother. Therefore the text adds:

58. "Before the earth was made; and the depths were not as yet and I was already conceived." This earth was that of the first Adam; for before his creation was decreed, and before the abysses of the ideas *ad extra* were formed in the divine mind, the likenesses of Christ and of his Mother were already conceived. The forms are called abysses, because there is an infinite distance between the being of God and that of creatures. This distance was measured (speaking according to our own way of understanding), when the ideals of the creatures were formed; for then these very abysses were formed. Not only was the Word conceived before all these by eternal generation from the Father, but His temporal generation from the Virgin Mother full of grace, had already been decreed and conceived in the divine mind. Inasmuch as no efficacious and complete decree of this temporal gen-

eration could exist without at the same time including his Mother, and such a Mother, the most holy Mary, was then and there conceived within that beautiful Immensity, and Her eternal record was written in the bosom of the Divinity, in order that for all the ages it should never be blotted out. She was stamped and delineated in the mind of the eternal Artificer and possessed the inseparable embraces of his love.

59. "Neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out." The images and ideals of creatures had not yet sprung from their source and origin; for they had not yet broken from the fountains through the channels of God's goodness and mercy, through which the divine will was to be moved to create the universe and to communicate his divine attributes and perfections. In respect to the entire rest of the universe, these waters and fountains were still repressed and detained within the bounds of the immense ocean of the Divinity; in his own Being there were as yet no founts or currents for outward manifestation, not having until then met their proper object, namely, men. But when these were encountered, the sacred humanity of Christ and his Virgin Mother had already furnished proper objects of benevolence. And therefore it is added:

60. "The mountains with their huge bulk had not been established," for God had not as yet then decreed the creation of the high mountains, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs or the other saints of great holiness, and this was not yet exerting its full weight and force in the mighty and sweet manner (Sap. 8, 1) in which God executes his counsels and great works. And not only before the mountains (which are the great saints) but also "before the hills I was brought forth," which are the orders of the holy angels. Before them the divine Mind

had conceived the most holy Humanity united hypostatically with the divine Word, and the Mother, who bore it. The Son and the Mother were conceived before the hierarchies of the angelic hosts, so, that, what David said in the eighth psalm, becomes intelligible: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lesser than the Angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor! Thou has set him over the works of thy hands; Thou hast subjected all things under his feet." Let all understand and know, that there is a Godman, who is above all angels and men, and that all are his inferiors and his servants, for being the first of men, He is God at the same time. He is the first in the divine Mind and in the divine Will, and with Him is associated and inseparably connected, one Woman and Virgin, his Mother, the exalted Queen of all creation.

61. And if man, as says the same psalm, was crowned with glory and was constituted above all the works of the hand of the Lord, it was because the Godman, his Chief, had merited both this crown, and also that, which is borne by the angels. The same psalm adds, that, after having made man a little less than the angels, He placed him over the works of his hands: yet these very angels were works of his hands. Thus David spoke to the whole human race, when he said: God made man a little less than the angels; but although man was inferior in his nature, one Man is found who is of superior make and is set over these same angels, who were works of the hand of God. This superiority is in the order of grace, not only as far as His Divinity united to the humanity is concerned, but also in regard to the humanity itself in so far as grace was conferred by the hypostatic union. In a proportionate degree his most holy

Mother likewise attained this superiority, just as some saints in virtue of the same incarnate Lord can reach a station and throne superior to that of the angels.

62. It is further said: "I was brought forth" or born, which means more than being conceived; for the latter refers to the divine intellect of the Blessed Trinity at the instant, when the Incarnation was known and, as it were, weighed in regard to its propriety. But to be brought forth refers to the act of the divine Will, which determined upon this work, for the most holy Trinity, in its divine councils, resolved upon the efficacious execution of this work by determining, and preliminarily putting into effect, the wonderful decree of the hypostatic union and of calling into being Mary most holy. That is the reason for using first the word "conceived" and then the words "brought forth," or born; for in reality the work was at first conceived and then immediately afterwards determined upon and willed.

63. "He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the (earth) world." Before the creation of the second earth, namely, the earthly paradise (the sense in which the earth is mentioned a second time), into which the first man, after he had been created from the first earth of the Damascene plains, was placed, and where he sinned, the sacred humanity of the Word and the material from which it was to spring, namely the Virgin, was determined upon. For it was necessary, that God should provide beforehand against her participating in sin and against her being in any way subject to it. The rivers and poles of the earth are the militant Church and the gifts of grace which were to flow from the sources of the Divinity. These were to flow toward all men and with efficacy to the saints and the foreknown. Fixed in God as in their pole or pivot and being dependent upon

Him they nevertheless move around Him in seeking after the virtues of faith, hope and charity, through which they sustain, vivify and direct themselves though yet entangled in human conversation. They are drawn toward their last end and toward the highest good, without swerving from the center about which they turn. Also the Sacraments and the institutions of the Church are here signified, her safety and stability, her beauty and sanctity without blot or wrinkle (Eph. 5, 27), for this is what is meant by this circumference and these rivers. Before the Most High prepared all this and ordained this mystical sphere and system, of which Christ was to be the center and head, He decreed the union of the Word with human nature, and foresaw his Mother, through whom He was to execute these wonders in the world.

64. "When he prepared the heavens, I was there." When He prepared and preordained the heaven and the reward, which was to be given to the just sons of the Church after their sojourn upon the earth, then already was decreed the union of the humanity with the Word, thereby meriting grace as their Head; and with Him his Mother most holy. Having destined the greater part of this grace for the Mother and the Son, He then disposed and arranged similar gifts of glory for the other saints.

65. "When with a certain law and compass he enclosed the depths," namely, when He decided to close the abysses of his Divinity in the person of the Son according to a certain law and measure, which no living being can ever compass or understand. He delineated this sphere and circumference, where none could nor ever can enter, except only the Word (since none but Himself can ever fill his place). For thus He was able to empty (Phil. 11, 7) and humiliate his Divinity in the humanity, then, both humanity and Divinity, in the womb

of the most holy Mary, afterwards, in the small quantity and species of the bread and wine, and finally, in the narrow space of sinful, mortal hearts. All this is indicated by the words: abysses, law and circle or limits. They are called "certain" on account of their vast bearing and also on account of the certainty, with which they were to be fulfilled (in spite of seeming impossibility), and on account of the difficulty of explaining them in words. It certainly did not appear feasible, that the Divinity should be subject to law, nor that It should enclose Itself within determined limits. But the wisdom and the power of that same Lord made it possible and has accomplished it by enclosing Himself in a designated created being.

66. "When he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of the waters; when he encompassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits." He calls here the just "heavens," for that is what they are, as God remains and dwells within them by grace, and through it, according to each one's disposition, gives them courage and firmness to rise above the earth as long as they are pilgrims. Afterwards He gives them a place and a dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem according to their merits. For them He poised the fountains and has divided them, distributing to each one with equity. He weighs the gifts of glory, the virtues, the helps, and the perfections, according to the dispositions of his Wisdom. When He resolved to make the distributions of these waters of grace, He also resolved to give to the humanity united to the Divinity all the ocean of graces and gifts, which naturally flowed from the Divinity in its union with the Onlybegotten of the Father. Although this ocean was infinite, He placed confines to it, namely, the humanity, in which was to dwell the plenitude of the

Divinity (Col. 2, 9); and it was enclosed thirty-three years within these confines, in order that He might dwell among men, and in order that, what happened to the three Apostles on Tabor mount might not happen to all men. In the same moment in which this entire ocean and all the rivers of grace reached Christ our Lord as being nearest to the Deity, they also redounded in his most holy Mother as being nearest to her Onlybegotten Son. For without the Mother, and precisely such a Mother, the gifts and graces of her Son could not have been disposed of in such order and with such high perfection. Nor did the admirable harmony of the celestial and spiritual machinery, and the distribution of the gifts of the Church militant and triumphant rest on any other foundation.

67. "When he balanced the foundation of the earth, I was with him forming all things." The works *ad extra* are common to the three divine Persons, for They are one God, one wisdom, one power; therefore it was unavoidably necessary, that the Word, in whom according to the Divinity all things are made, should be in union with the Father in making them. But here more is meant, for also the incarnate Word was already present together with his most holy Mother in the divine Will. Thus, just as through the Word, as far as He is God, all things were made, so also for Him, in the first place and because He is the most noble and most worthy end, were created the foundations of the earth and all that is contained in it.

68. Therefore it is farther said: "And I was delighted every day, playing before him at all times, playing in the world." The incarnate Word diverted Himself at all times, because He knew all the ages and the lives of all the mortals, all being as one day in comparison with

eternity (Ps. 89, 4). He was delighted, because the whole course of Creation had found its end, for when the ultimate day with all its perfection should arrive, men were to enjoy the affluence of grace and the crown of glory. He diverted Himself as it were, counting the days, when He should descend from heaven to earth and assume human flesh. He knew that all the works and thoughts of men were like a play, wherein all is mere burlesque and deceit. He saw also the just, who, though so weak and limited in their capacity, nevertheless would be fit for the manifestation and communication of God's glory and perfections. He compared his immutability with the changefulness of men, and how He was nevertheless to act in concert with them. He delighted in his own works, and especially in those, which He ordained in his most holy Mother. He took a great delight in the prospect of assuming the form of man within Her and in making Her worthy of so great a privilege. And because the conception of these ideals and the efficacious decree of the divine Will in their regard were to be followed by their actual fulfillment, therefore the divine Word adds:

69. "And my delight is to be with the children of men." My recreation is to work for them and show them favors: my contentment is to die for them and my joy is to be their Teacher and their Redeemer. My delight is to raise the needy one from the dust and to unite Myself with the lowly one (Ps. 112, 7); my pleasure is to unbend my Divinity for this purpose, and to clothe it with human nature, to constrain and debase Myself, and to suspend the glory of my body in order to make Myself capable of suffering and of meriting for men the friendship of the Father; to be a Mediator between his most just indignation and the malice of men, and to be their Model and Head, whom they might imitate.

70. O eternal and incomprehensible Goodness! how am I ravished with admiration, when I compare the immensity of thy immutable Being with the insignificance of man! When I see thy eternal love mediating between two extremes of such immeasurable distance; a love infinite, for a creature so insignificant and at the same time so ungrateful! Oh, on what a low and debased object, O Lord, dost Thou cast thy eyes, and on what a noble Object can and should man fix his thought and his affection in beholding such a mystery! Filled with admiration and with sadness of heart, I lament over the unhappy state of men, their darkness and blindness, since they do not make any effort to understand how much thy Majesty has been beforehand in looking down upon them and in offering them true felicity with such great love and care as if thy own consisted in it.

71. All his works, and the disposition of them, as they were to be called into being, the Lord had in his mind *ab initio,* and He numbered and weighed them according to his equity and rectitude. He knew the constitution of the world before its creation, as it is written in the book of Wisdom (7, 18 Seq.). He knew the beginning, the middle and the end of time, the changes of the years and the courses of the ages, the disposition of the stars, the powers of the elements, the nature of animals, the wrath of wild beasts, the force of winds, the difference of plants, the virtues of roots and the thoughts of men. All He weighed and counted (Sap. 11, 21), not only that which is literally true of the rational and irrational creatures, but He preordained also all that which is signified mystically by these creatures. But as this comes not within my scope at present, I do not speak of it in this place.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING A DOUBT, WHICH I PROPOSED REGARDING THE DOCTRINE CONTAINED IN THESE CHAPTERS, AND THE ANSWER TO IT.

72. In regard to the significance of the doctrine contained in the last two chapters a doubt occurred to me, and I have often heard and been informed by learned persons, that the same is discussed also in the schools. The doubt was as follows: If the principal motive of the incarnation of the Word, was to make him Head and the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1, 15) and, through the hypostatic union with human nature, to communicate his attributes and perfections, in a manner befitting his grace and glory, to the predestined; and, if to assume flesh capable of suffering and dying for man was his secondary motive: then, if these assumptions are true, how comes it, that there is such a diversity of opinion in regard to it in the holy Church? The most common assumption is, that the eternal Word descended from heaven expressly for the purpose of redeeming men through his most holy Passion and Death.

73. This doubt I proposed humbly to the Lord. After giving me an understanding and a great enlightenment, by which I perceived and understood many mysteries, He condescended to answer me. The mysteries themselves I cannot explain, because the words of the Lord comprehend and mean so much. But his answer was as follows: "My spouse and dove, hear: for as a Father and a Teacher I will solve thy doubt and instruct thee in thy ignorance.

Know, that the principal and legitimate end of the decree, which I had in view in resolving to communicate my Divinity in the hypostatic union of the Word with human nature, was the glory, which would redound to my name through this communication, and also that which was to redound to the creatures capable thereof. This decree would without doubt have been executed in the Incarnation, even if the first man had not sinned: for it was an express decree, substantially independent of any condition. Therefore, the intention of my will, which was primarily to communicate Myself to the soul and humanity of the Word, was to be efficaciously fulfilled. This was conformable to the justice and rectitude of my works, and, although it was subsequent in its execution, it was nevertheless antecedent in my intention. If I waited before sending my Onlybegotten, it was because I had resolved to prepare for Him beforehand a holy and select congregation of the just, who, presupposing the fall of mankind, would be like roses among the thorns, that is, the sinners. Foreseeing the fall of the human race, I determined, by an express decree, that the Word should come in a form capable of suffering and death for the Redemption of his people, whose head He was to be. Thus my infinite love for man could be so much the more known and manifest and a just satisfaction would be rendered to my equity and justice; and if he, who was to be first in existence, was a sinner: He that was to be first in dignity, would be the Redeemer (I Cor. 15, 21). Thus also men might come to know the gravity of sin, and love one and the same Creator, Vivifier, Redeemer, and Judge of all mortals. I also wished as it were, to compel them to make a proper return of gratitude and love. Refusing to punish them without reprieve, as I have punished the apostate angels, but pardoning them and looking upon

them with mercy, I offered them an opportune remedy by executing the rigor of my justice upon my onlybegotten Son and reserving for man the kindness of my great mercy."

74. "And in order that thou mayest better understand the answer to thy doubt, remember, that there is neither any succession of time in my decrees, nor any need of it for the perception and the execution of them. Those that say that the Word became incarnate in order to redeem the world, say well; and those that say, that He would have become incarnate also, if man had not sinned, likewise speak well, only it must be understood in the right way. For if Adam had not sinned, Christ would have descended from heaven in that form, which would be suitable to the state of man's innocence; but as Adam sinned, I resolved by the secondary decree, that He should be made of passible nature; since foreseeing sin, it was proper, that it should be repaired in the way in which He has done it. And as you desire to know, how the mystery of the Incarnation would have taken place, if man had preserved the state of innocence, know, that the human substance would have been essentially the same as now, only it would be clothed with the gifts of impassibility and immortality, such as my Onlybegotten possessed after his Resurrection and before his Ascension. He would live and converse with men; the hidden sacraments and mysteries would all be manifest; and many times would his glory shine forth as it happened once in his mortal life (Mark 17, 1). He would, in that state of man's innocence, have become manifest to all men in the same manner as He once showed Himself to the three apostles in his mortal state. All those on the way to heaven would see the great glory of my Onlybegotten; they would be consoled by conversing with Him and

they would place no obstacle to his divine workings, for they would be without sin. But all this was impeded and spoiled by the guilt of sin and on that account it was proper, that He should come in passible and mortal nature."

75. "The existence of different opinions regarding these sacraments and other mysteries in the Church, arises from the fact that I manifest and give light concerning one set of mysteries to some teachers, and illumine others concerning other mysteries; for mortals are not capable of receiving all the light. It is not expedient, that the knowledge of all things be given to one man, as long as men are viators. For also in the state of comprehensors, they obtain them in parts and according to the state and the merits of each. But the plenitude of all gifts is due only to the humanity of my Onlybegotten and to his Mother in proper proportion. The other mortals receive it neither entirely, nor is it always given so clearly, as to assure them altogether. Therefore they must acquire it by means of study and the use of letters and science There are also many truths revealed in holy Scriptures and to some men light is given from above. Yet, as I leave most men to work by their natural light, it must follow, that they understand these mysteries in different senses, and that there exist different explanations and different meanings regarding the different passages in Scripture; for each adheres to his opinion according to his understanding. Many have a good intention and the light and truth is essentially one, but it is made use of with diversity of judgment and inclinations, so that some adhere to these teachers, others to those and so the controversies arise among them."

76. "One of the reasons why the opinion, that the Word came from heaven mainly for the sake of redeem-

ing the world, is more common can be partly explained by the fact, that the mystery of the Redemption with its object has already been consummated and has been mentioned so often in Scriptures, thus causing it to be better understood and manifested. The impassibility of Christ on the contrary was neither effected, nor was it simply and absolutely decreed. All that pertained to this state remains concealed and nobody could be sure of it, except those particular ones, whom I select for the reception of that light, and for the revelation of this decree of my love for man. And although this would certainly be capable of moving men, if they would ponder over it and penetrate it; yet the decree and the work of his Redemption from sin is more powerful and efficacious to move them toward some acknowledgment and return of my immense love; for this is the end, which prompts my works. Therefore I fittingly provide, that these motives and mysteries be kept especially before the mind and be more frequently expounded. Advert also, that in one work two results can well be intended, when one of them is conditional. Thus it was that the Word would not have descended in passible flesh, if man had not sinned, and if he would sin, He would come in a body capable of suffering: whatever would happen the decree of the Incarnation would not be left unfulfilled. I desire, that the sacraments of the Redemption be recognized and held in esteem and that they be always remembered, in order that they may bring the proper fruit. But just as much I desire, that the mortals recognize the Word as their Head and as the final Object of all Creation and of all the rest of the human race. For, conjointly with my own kindness, his formation was the principal motive for giving existence to the creatures. Therefore He should be honored, not only because He has redeemed the human

race, but also because he furnished the motive for its creation."

77. "Take notice also, my spouse, that very often I permit and cause differences of opinions among the doctors and teachers. Thus some of them maintain what is true and others, according to their natural disposition, defend what is doubtful. Others still again are permitted to say even what is not true, though not in open contradiction to the veiled truths of faith, which all must hold. Some also teach, what is possible according to their supposition. By this varied light, truth is traced, and the mysteries of faith become more manifest. Doubt serves as a stimulus to the understanding for the investigation of truth. Therefore controversies of the teachers fulfill a proper and holy end. They are also permitted in order, to make it known, that real science dwells in my Church more than in the combined study of all the holy and perfect teachers, and that she can make them wise above the wisdom of the worldly wise; that there is above them One, who is the Prompter of the wise (Wis. 7, 15), namely, Myself; who alone knows all and comprehends all; who weighs and measures, without ever being measured or comprehended (Wis. 9, 13); that men, although they may search my judgments and testimonies ever so much, cannot attain them, unless I give the intelligence and light (Job 32, 8), who am the beginning and the Author of all wisdom and science. I desire that men, in acknowledging all this, give Me praise, exaltation, confession, supremity and glory forever."

78. "I desire also that the holy doctors acquire for themselves much grace, light and glory by their earnest, laudable and sacred study, and that the truth be more and more clearly detected and purified, and be traced to its source. By humbly investigating the mysteries and

the admirable works of my right hand, they come to be partakers of them and of the bread of the understanding, the holy Scriptures (Eccli. 15, 3). I have especially shown my Providence in regard to doctors and teachers, although their opinions and doubts have been so diverse and for such different ends. Sometimes, for my greater glory and honor, sometimes for earthly purposes, they are permitted to dispute, and to contradict each other; and there is a great inequality in the manner in which they have proceeded and do proceed to show their emulation and earnestness. But with all this I have directed, governed and enlightened them, giving them my protection in such a manner, that the truth may be investigated and clearly manifested. The light has spread out, so that many of my perfections and wonderful works have been made known, and the holy Scriptures have been interpreted according to high standards, which has been very pleasing to Me. For this reason the fury of hell, with inconceivable envy (especially in these, our times), has raised its throne of iniquity, pretending to engulf the waters of the Jordan (Job 40, 18), and obscure the light of holy faith by heretical doctrines and seeking to sow its false seeds by the help of man (Matth. 13, 25). But the rest of the Church and its truths are in most perfect order; the Catholics, although much involved and blind in other respects, hold nevertheless the truths of faith and its holy light without diminution. I call all men with fatherly love to share this happiness, yet few are the elect, who choose to respond to my call."

79. "I also desire thee to understand, my spouse, how well my Providence disposes things in such a way, that the teachers, by the diversity of their opinions, and by their own diligent exertion and study, scrutinize more deeply my testimonies and thus lay bare the marrow of

the holy Scriptures to wayfaring men. But it would be very pleasing to Me and in harmony with my service, if learned persons would extinguish and do away with pride, envy and ambition after vain honors; also all the other passions and vices, which arise from them, together with the bad seeds, that are likely to be generated from that sort of occupation (Matth. 13, 25). But I do not root out this bad seed at present, in order that the good may not be rooted out with the bad." All this the Lord spoke to me and many other things, which I cannot make manifest. May his Majesty eternally be blessed, who, without disdaining the insignificance of so insipient and useless a woman, deemed it proper to enlighten and to satisfy my ignorance in so bountiful and merciful a manner. May the blessed spirits and the just of the earth give Him praise and thanksgiving without end!

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE MOST HIGH GAVE A BEGINNING TO HIS WORKS AND CREATED ALL MATERIAL THINGS FOR THE USE OF MAN, WHILE ANGELS AND MEN WERE CREATED TO BE HIS PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE INCARNATE WORD.

80. The Cause of all causes is God, who created all things that have being. His powerful arm gave existence to all his wonderful works *ad extra* when and how He chose. The beginning and succession of the work of Creation is described by Moses in the opening chapter of Genesis. Since the Lord has given me an understanding thereof, I will mention what I think useful for elucidating the mysterious origin of the Incarnation of the Word and of our Redemption.

81. The words of the first chapter of Genesis are as follows:

1. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

2. "And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters.

3. "And God said: Be light made. And light was made.

4. "And God saw the light that it was good; and he divided the light from the darkness.

5. "And he called the light day, and the darkness night;and there was evening and morning one day," etc.

Of the first day Moses says that "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Though He himself is immutable in being, the almighty God, in calling creatures into existence, issued, so to say, forth from his own Self and gave to creatures a being of their own, in order that He might, as it were, rejoice in the works of his own

hands, as being the perfect and adequate results of his operations. And before creating intellectual and rational creatures, desiring also the order of executing these works to be most perfect, He created heaven for angels and men; and the earth as a place of pilgrimage for mortals. These places are so adapted to their end and so perfect, that as David says of them, the heavens publish the glory of the Lord, the firmament and the earth announce the glory of the works of his hands (Ps. 18, 2). The heavens in their beauty manifest his magnificence and glory, because in them is deposited the predestined reward of the just. And the earthly firmament announced that there would be creatures and men to inhabit the earth and that men should journey upon it to their Creator. Before He created them the Most High wished to provide for them and create that which is necessary for the attainment of their end, and for living in the manner ordained for them. Thus all parts of the creation would be compelled as it were to obey and love their Maker and Benefactor and by his works to learn of his holy name and of his perfections (Rom. 1, 20).

82. Of the earth Moses says, that it was void, which he does not say of the heavens; for God had created the angels at the instant indicated by the word of Moses: "God said: Let there be light, and light was made." He speaks here not only of material light, but also of the intellectual or angelic lights. He does not make express mention of them, but merely includes them in this word, on account of the proclivity of the Hebrews to attribute Divinity to new things, even of much greater inferiority than the angels. But the metaphor of light was very appropriate to signify the angelic nature and mystically, the light of their science and grace, with which they were endowed at their creation. God created the earth conjointly with the heavens, in order to call into exist-

ence hell in its centre; for, at the instant of its creation, there were left in the interior of that globe spacious and wide cavities, suitable for hell, purgatory and limbo. And in hell was created at the same time material fire and other requisites, which now serve for the punishment of the damned. The Lord was presently to divide the light from the darkness and to call the light day and the darkness night. And this did happen not only in regard to the natural night and day, but in regard to the good and bad angels; for to the good, He gave the eternal light of his vision and called it day, the eternal day; and to the bad, the night of sin, casting them into the eternal darkness of hell. Thus we were to be taught the intimate relation between the merciful liberality of the Creator and Vivifier and the justice of the most just Judge in punishment.

83. The angels were created in the empyrean heavens and in the state of grace by which they might be first to merit the reward of glory. For although they were in the midst of glory, the Divinity itself was not to be made manifest to them face to face and unveiled, until they should have merited such a favor by obeying the divine will. The holy angels, as well as the bad ones, remained only a very short time in the state of probation; for their creation and probation with its result were three distinct instants or moments, separated by short intermissions. In the first instant they were all created and endowed with graces and gifts, coming into existence as most beautiful and perfect creatures. Then followed a short pause, during which the will of the Creator was propounded and intimated, and the law and command was given them, to acknowledge Him as their Maker and supreme Lord, and to fulfill the end for which they had been created. During this pause, instant or interval, Saint Michael and his angels fought

that great battle with the dragon and his followers, which is described by the apostle Saint John in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. The good angels, persevering in grace, merited eternal happiness and the disobedient ones, rebelling against God, merited the punishment, which they now suffer.

84. Although all this of the second instant could have happened in a very brief time on account of the subtle nature of the angels and the power of God, nevertheless I understood, that the kind consideration of the Most High permitted a certain delay. With the interposition of some intervals of time, He proposed to them the good and the bad, truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, divine grace and friendship as opposed to sin and enmity of God. They were enabled to see eternal reward and eternal punishment, the perdition of Lucifer and of those that would follow him. His Majesty showed them hell and its pains. They saw it all; for, by virtue of their superior and excellent nature, they understood the essence of other more qualified and limited creatures; so that, before falling from grace, they were clearly aware of the place of their chastisement. Although they did not know in the same manner the reward of glory, they had of it other knowledge and besides they had the manifest and express promise of the Lord The Most High had therefore justified his cause and proceeded with the greatest equity and justice. But as all this goodness and equity did not suffice to restrain Lucifer and his followers, they were chastised in their stubbornness and hurled into the depths of the hellish caverns, while the good angels were confirmed in eternal grace and glory. All this was consummated in the third instant, and thus it became truly manifest that no being outside of God himself is impeccable by nature, since the angel, who held such an

exalted position and was adorned with so many great gifts of knowledge and grace, nevertheless sinned and was lost. What will become of human frailty, if the divine power does not defend it and if it forces God to forsake it?

85. It remains to investigate the motive, which urged Lucifer and his confederates to sin and what was the occasion of their disobedience and fall, for this is the point to which I wanted to come. In regard to this, it was made known to me that they could commit many sins as far as the guilt of sin (secundum reatum) is concerned, although they did not consummate them in acts. However, on account of those which they did actually commit freely and of their own depraved will, they acquired the disposition to all bad acts, inducing others to commit and approving in others those sins, which they could not commit themselves. Following the bad inclinations which from that time on filled Lucifer, he fell into a most disorderly selflove, which arose from the consciousness of being endowed with greater gifts and greater beauty of nature and grace, than the other inferior angels. He tarried with inordinate pleasure in this consciousness; and thus self-satisfied he became lax and remiss in the gratitude, which was due to God as the sole cause of all that he had received. Turning again and again in admiration toward himself, he took pleasure in his own beauty and grace, attributing them to himself and loving them as his own. This disorderly selflove not only caused him to exalt himself on account of the superior virtues, which he had received, but also induced him to harbor envy and covetousness for other gifts and for excellences not his own. Then, because he could not attain them, he conceived a mortal hatred and indignation against God, who created him out of nothing, and against all his creatures.

86. Hence arose his disobedience, presumption, injus-

tice, infidelity, blasphemy, and perhaps also a certain kind of idolatry, for he coveted for himself the adoration and reverence due to God. He blasphemed the divine magnificence and holiness, he failed in the trust and loyalty due to Him; he plotted to destroy all the creatures, and presumed to be able to do all this and much more by his own power. Thus his pride ascends continually (Ps. 73, 23) and perseveres, though his arrogance is greater than his strength, for in this he cannot increase (Is. 16, 6) and in sin, one abyss calls the other (Ps. 14, 8). The first angel who sinned was Lucifer, as is described in the fourteenth chapter of Isaias. He induced others to follow him and therefore he is called the prince of the demons; not on account of his natural gifts, for these would not secure to him that title, but on account of his guilt. Those that sinned were not all of one order or hierarchy, but among all hierarchies there were many who sinned.

87. It is proper, that I also explain what was made known to me concerning the kind of honor and excellence, which Lucifer aspired to and envied. As in the works of God there is measure, number and weight (Wis. 11, 21), his Providence decided to show to the angels, immediately after their creation and before they could incline to diverse ends, the purpose for which He had created them with such an exalted and perfect nature. Of all this I obtained the following information: At first they received a more explicit intelligence of the being of God, one in substance, trine in person, and that they were commanded to adore and reverence Him as their Creator and highest Lord, infinite in his essence and attributes. All subjected themselves to this command and obeyed it, but with a certain difference; the good angels obeyed through love and on account of the justice of it, offering their love and good will, freely

admitting and believing what was above their intelligence, and obeying with joy. Lucifer, on the other hand, submitted himself, because the opposite seemed to him impossible. He did not do it with perfect charity, for he, as it were, was divided in his will between himself and the infallible truth of the Lord. In consequence it happened that the precept appeared to him in a measure difficult and violent, and his fulfilling of it was wanting in love and in the desire to do justice. Thus he exposed himself beforehand to the danger of not persevering. Although grace did not leave him on account of this remissness and slowness in the accomplishment of these first acts, nevertheless his bad disposition began with them; for there remained with him a certain weakness and laxity of virtue and spirit, and the perfection of his nature did not shine forth as it should. It appears to me that the effect of this remissness in Lucifer, is similar to that which is caused in the soul by a deliberate venial sin. I do not say that he sinned mortally, nor even venially at that time, since he fulfilled the precept of God; but this fulfillment was remiss and imperfect, springing more from a sense of overwhelming compulsion, than from a loving willingness to obey. Thus he put himself in danger of falling.

88. In the second place, the angels were informed that God was to create a human nature and reasoning creatures lower than themselves, in order that they too should love, fear and reverence God, as their Author and eternal Good. They were informed that these were to stand in high favor, and that the second Person of the blessed Trinity was to become incarnate and assume their nature, raising it to the hypostatic union and to divine Personality; that therefore they were to acknowledge Him as their Head, not only as God, but as God and man, adoring Him and reverencing Him as God-

man. Moreover, these same angels were to be his inferiors in dignity and grace and were to be his servants. God gave them an intelligence of the propriety and equity, of the justice and reasonableness of such a position. For the acceptation of the merits foreseen of this Mangod was exhibited to them as the source of the grace which they now possessed and of the glory which they were to obtain. They understood also that they themselves had been, and all the rest of the creatures should be created for his glory, and that He was to be their Head. All those that were capable of knowing and enjoying God, were to be the people of the Son of God, to know and reverence Him as their Chief. These commands were at once given to the angels.

89. To this command all the obedient and holy angels submitted themselves and they gave their full assent and acknowledgment with an humble and loving subjection of the will. But Lucifer, full of envy and pride, resisted and induced his followers to resist likewise, as they in reality did, preferring to follow him and disobey the divine command. This wicked prince persuaded them, that he would be their chief and that he would set up a government independent and separate from Christ. So great was the blindness which envy and pride could cause in an angel, and so pernicious was the infection that the contagion of sin spread among innumerable other angels.

90. Then happened that great battle in heaven, which St. John describes (Apoc. 12). For the obedient and holy angels, filled with an ardent desire of hastening the glory of the Most High and the honor of the incarnate Word, asked permission and, as it were, the consent of God, to resist and contradict the dragon, and the permission was granted. But also another mystery was concealed in all this: When it was revealed to the angels that they would have to obey the incarnate Word, an-

other, a third precept was given them, namely, that they were to admit as a superior conjointly with Him, a Woman, in whose womb the Onlybegotten of the Father was to assume flesh and that this Woman was to be the Queen and Mistress of all the creatures. The good angels by obeying this command of the Lord, with still increasing and more alert humility, freely subjected themselves, praising the power and the mysteries of the Most High. Lucifer, however, and his confederates, rose to a higher pitch of pride and boastful insolence. In disorderly fury he aspired to be himself the head of all the human race and of the angelic orders, and if there was to be a hypostatic union, he demanded that it be consummated in him.

91. The decree constituting him inferior to the Mother of the Incarnate Word, our Mistress, he opposed with horrible blasphemies. Turning against the Author of these great wonders in unbridled indignation and calling upon the other angels, he exhorted them, saying: "Unjust are these commands and injury is done to my greatness; this human nature which Thou, Lord, lookest upon with so much love and which thou favorest so highly, I will persecute and destroy. To this end I will direct all my power and all my aspirations. And this Woman, Mother of the Word, I will hurl from the position in which Thou hast proposed to place Her, and at my hands, the plan, which Thou settest up, shall come to naught."

92. This proud boast so aroused the indignation of the Lord that in order to humble it, He spoke to Lucifer: "This Woman, whom thou refusest to honor, shall crush thy head and by Her shalt thou be vanquished and annihilated (Gen. 3, 15). And if, through thy pride, death enters into the world (Wis. 2, 24), life and salvation of mortals shall enter through the humility of this

Woman. Those that are of the nature and likeness of that Man and Woman, shall enjoy the gifts and the crowns, which thou and thy followers have lost." To all this the dragon, filled with indignation against whatever he understood of the divine will and decrees, answered only with pride and by threatening destruction to the whole human race. The good angels saw the just indignation of the Most High against Lucifer and his apostates and they combated them with the arms of the understanding, reason and truth.

93. The Almighty at this conjuncture worked another wonderful mystery. Having given to all the angels a sufficiently clear intelligence of the great mystery of the hypostatic Union, He showed them the image of the most holy Virgin by means of an imaginary vision (I speak here according to our way of understanding such things). They were shown the perfection of the human nature in the revelation of an image representing a most perfect Woman, in whom the almighty arm of the Most High would work more wonderfully than in all the rest of the creatures. For therein He was to deposit the graces and gifts of his right hand in a higher and more eminent manner. This sign or vision of the Queen of heaven and of the Mother of the incarnate Word was made known and manifest to all the angels, good and bad. The good ones at the sign of it broke forth in admiration and in canticles of praise and from that time on began to defend the honor of the God incarnate and of his holy Mother, being armed with ardent zeal and with the invincible shield of that vision. The dragon and his allies on the contrary conceived implacable hatred and fury against Christ and his most holy Mother. Then happened all that which is described in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, which I will explain, as far as it has been given me, in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH FOLLOWS UP THE PREVIOUS DISCOURSE BY THE EXPLANATION OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

94. The literal version of that chapter of the Apocalypse is as follows:

1. "And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars:

2. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.

3. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns; and on his head seven diadems.

4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth and the dragon stood before the woman, who was ready to be delivered; that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son.

5. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod; and her son was taken up to God, and to his throne.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, that there they should feed her a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

7. And there was a great battle in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon fought and his angels.

8. And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And the dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying: Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death.

12. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil is come down unto you, having a great wrath and knowing that he hath but a short time.

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman, who brought forth the man-child:

14. And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water as if it were a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the river.

16. And the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed the river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was angry against the woman and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who

keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

18. And he stood upon the sands of the sea."

95. Such are the words of the Evangelist. He speaks in the past, because at that time was shown to him a vision of that which had already happened. He says: "And a great sign appeared in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars." This sign appeared really in the heavens by divine disposition and was shown to the good and the bad angels, in order that seeing it, they might subject their will to the pleasure and the commands of God. They saw it therefore before the good ones chose the good and before the bad ones had turned to evil. It was as it were a mirror of the wonderful perfection of the handiwork of God in creating human nature. Although He had already revealed this perfection to the angels in making known to them the mystery of the hypostatic union, yet He wished to reveal it to them also in a different manner by showing it to them in a mere Creature, the most perfect and holy which, next to the humanity of our Lord, He was to create. It was also a sign for the assurance of the good angels and for confusion of the bad, since it manifested to them that in spite of the offense which was committed, God would not let the decree of creating man be unfulfilled, and that the incarnate Word and this Woman, his Mother, would please Him infinitely more than the disobedient angels could ever displease Him. This sign was also like the rainbow, which appeared after the flood in the clouds of heaven, as a guarantee that even if men should sin like the angels and become disobedient, they were not to be punished like the angels without remission, but would be furnished with salutary medicine and

remedy by this wonderful sign. It was as if God said to the angels: I will not chastise in the same way the other creatures which I call into my existence, because this Woman, in whom my Onlybegotten is to assume flesh, belongs to that race. My Son shall be the Restorer of friendship and the Pacifier of my justice; He shall open the way to the felicity, which sin would close.

96. In further testimony of this, after the punishment of the disobedient angels, God made use of the sign in order to show that his anger, which the pride of Lucifer had occasioned, was appeased and placated. And according to our way of understanding, He rejoiced in the presence of the Queen thus represented in that image. He gave the angels to understand that, through Christ and his Mother, He would now divert upon men the grace which the apostates had lost through their rebellion. There was also another effect of that great sign among the good angels; namely, that since they had been, as it were, made sorrowful and made unhappy (speaking according to our way of understanding) the Most High now wished to rejoice them with the sight of that image and to increase their essential beatitude by this accidental pleasure merited by their victory over Lucifer. Seeing this Woman so full of clemency (Esther 4, 11), appearing to them as a sign of peace, they understood at once that the decree of punishment was not issued against them, since they had obeyed the precepts of the Lord and his divine will. Much of the mysteries and sacraments of the Incarnation, and those of the Church militant and its members, were made manifest to them in this sign. They understood also, that they were to assist and help the human race, by watching over men, by defending them against their enemies and by leading them to eternal felicity. They

saw that they themselves would owe their felicity to the merits of the incarnate Word and that the Creator had preserved them also in grace through Christ preordained in the divine Mind.

97. Just as all this was a great joy and happiness for the good angels, so it was a great torment for the evil spirits. It was to the latter a part and the beginning of their punishment. For they saw at once, that having failed to profit by this sign, they were to be conquered and crushed by it (3, 15). All these mysteries, and many others, which I cannot explain, the Evangelist wished to comprehend in this chapter, and include in that great sign; although for us it will remain obscure and enigmatic until the proper time arrives.

98. The sun, which is mentioned as clothing the Woman, is the true Sun of Justice. The angels were to understand by it, that the Most High was to remain with this Woman by his grace in order to overshadow and defend Her by the protection of his invincible right hand. The moon was beneath her feet; for as the two planets, the sun and the moon, divide night and day, therefore the moon, being the symbol of the darkness of sin, is beneath her feet, and the sun, being the symbol of the light of grace, clothes Her for all eternity. Thus also the deficiencies of grace in all mortals must be beneath her feet, and never must rise either to her soul or to her body, which on the contrary were to be ever superior to all angels and men. She alone was to be free from the darkness and the wanings of Lucifer and of Adam, treading them under foot without their being able to gain any advantage over Her. And just as She rose above all the guilt and the effects of original and of actual sin, God now placed these in a symbolical manner under her feet, in order that the good angels might know,

and the bad ones, (though they did not attain full knowledge of the mysteries), might fear this Woman even before She came into actual existence.

99. The crown of twelve stars are evidently all the virtues, with which that Queen of heaven and earth was to be adorned. But the mystery of its being composed of twelve stars has reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, by which all the elect and the predestined are designated, as is mentioned in the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse by the Evangelist (Apoc. 7, 4). And since the gifts, graces and virtues of all the elect were to crown their Queen in a most eminent and exalted degree, a crown of twelve stars was placed around her head.

100. "And being with child." In the presence of all the angels, for the rejoicing of the good and for the punishment of the evil ones, who resisted the divine will and the fulfillment of these mysteries, it became manifest that the three Persons of the blessed Trinity had selected this wonderful Woman as the Mother of the Onlybegotten of the Father. And since the dignity of the mother of the Word was the principal beginning and foundation of all the great excellences of this great Mistress and of this her symbol, She was shown to the angels as being the resting place of the holy Trinity, represented in the divine personality of the Word incarnate. For on account of their inseparable union and coexistence, all the three Persons could not fail to be there, wherever any one of Them was present; although only the Person of the Word assumed human flesh and with Him alone was She pregnant.

101. "She cried travailing in birth." Although the dignity of this Queen and of that mystery was to be hidden in the beginning in order that God might be born

humble, poor and unknown: yet afterwards the news of that Birth was proclaimed so loudly, that its first echo excited King Herod and filled him with uneasiness. It drew the Magi from their palaces and kingdoms in order to find Him (Matth. 2, 3). Some hearts were touched with fear, others moved to interior affection. The Fruit of this birth, growing until it was raised on the Cross, gave such loud voices, that It was heard from the rising to the setting sun (John 12, 32), and from farthest north to farthest south (Rom. 10, 18). So far then was heard the voice of that Woman who gave birth to the Word of the eternal Father.

102. "And was in pain to be delivered." He does not say this because She was to give birth in bodily pain, for that is not possible in this divine Parturition. But because it was to be a great sorrow for that Mother to see that divine Infant come forth from the secrecy of her virginal womb in order to suffer and die as a victim for the satisfaction of the sins of the world. For this Queen could know and did know all this beforehand by her knowledge of the holy Scriptures. On account of the natural love of such a Mother for such a Son, She must be deeply afflicted thereby, although in subjection to the will of God. In this pain was also foreshadowed the sorrow of this most gentle Mother at the thought of being deprived of the presence of her Treasure, after He should have issued from her virginal womb; for although her soul always enjoyed his presence as to his Divinity, yet She was to be a long time without his bodily presence, according to which He was exclusively her Son. The Most High had determined to exempt Her from guilt, but not from the labors and sorrows corresponding to the reward, which was prepared for Her. Thus the sorrows of this birth were not the effect of sin,

as they are in the descendants of Eve, but they were the effect of the intense and perfect love of the most holy Mother for her divine Son. All these mysteries were motives of praise and admiration for the good angels and the beginning of punishment for the bad angels.

103. "And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns; and on his head were seven diadems, and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth." Thereupon followed the punishment of Lucifer and his allies; for after uttering his blasphemies against the Woman, who had been symbolized in the heavenly sign, he found himself visibly and exteriorly transformed from a most beautiful angel into a fierce and most horrid dragon. He reared with fury his seven heads, that is, he led on the seven legions or squadrons of all those that followed and fell with him. To each principality or congregation of these followers he gave a head, commanding them to sin on their own account and undertake the leadership in the seven mortal sins, which are commonly called capital. For in these are contained the other sins and they constitute as it were the regiments that rise up against God. They are the sins called pride, envy, avarice, anger, luxury, intemperance and sloth. They are the seven diadems with which Lucifer, after being changed into a dragon, was crowned. This is the punishment with which he was visited by the Most High and which he acquired as a return for his horrible wickedness for himself and for his confederate angels. To all of them were apportioned the punishment and the pains, which corresponded to their malice and to the share which they had in originating the seven capital sins.

104. The ten horns were the triumphs of the iniquity

and malice of the dragon, and the vain and arrogant glorification and exaltation which he attributed to himself in the execution of his wickedness. In his depraved desire of attaining the object of his arrogance, he offered to the unhappy angels his malicious and poisonous friendship and his counterfeit principalities, commanderships and rewards. These promises, full of bestial ignorance and error, were the tail with which the dragon drew after him the third part of the stars of heaven. These angels were the stars and if they would have persevered, they would have shone with the rest of the angels and the just, like the sun through the perpetual eternities (Dan. 12, 3). But the punishment which they merited drew them down to the earth of their unhappiness into its very centre, which is hell, where they will for all eternity be deprived of light and happiness (Jude 6).

105. "And the dragon stood before the woman, who was ready to be delivered; that when She should be delivered, he might devour her Son." The pride of Lucifer was so boundless that he pretended to place his throne on high, and with the utmost boasting he spoke in presence of the Woman symbolized in the heavenly sign: "This Son, which that Woman is to bring forth, is of lower nature than mine: I shall devour Him and destroy Him. I shall lead on my followers against Him, I shall spread my doctrines against his decrees and against the laws, which He shall set up. I shall wage perpetual war and contradiction against Him." But the answer of the most high Lord was that this Woman was to bring forth a Manchild, who was to reign over the nations with an iron rod. "This Man" (the Lord added) "shall be not only the Son of that Woman, but He shall also be my Son, true God and true man, gifted

with power to overcome thy pride and crush thy head. He will be to thee and to all those who hear and follow thee, a powerful Judge, who shall rule thee with a rod of iron and bring to naught all thy vain and aspiring thoughts. This Son shall be taken up to my throne, where He shall be seated at my right hand as Judge, and I will place his enemies for a footstool beneath his feet in order to triumph over them (Ps. 2, 9). He will be rewarded as the Just man, who, being at the same time true God, has done so much for his creatures; all shall know Him and shall give Him reverence and honor (Ps. 109, 1). But thou, as the most unhappy, shalt know what is the day of the wrath of the Allpowerful (Sophon 1, 14). This Woman, too, shall be placed in solitude, where She will have a place assigned by Me" (Apos. 12, 6). This solitude, to which the Woman fled, is the position which our great Queen holds, as being only and alone, unsurpassed in sanctity and exempt from all sin. For She, being of the same nature as mortals, far excelled all the angels in grace, merits and gifts attained in common with them. Thus, She who was the only One and without a compeer among creatures, fled and was placed in a solitude exalted above all the rest. This solitude was so far removed from all sin that the dragon could not even attain sight of it, nor could he from the time of her Conception discern anything of Her. The Most High placed Her alone and as the only One in the world, who never had intercourse with, and never was in subordination to the serpent. On the contrary, with solemn promise and assurance He affirmed and decreed: "This Woman, from the first instant of her existence, shall be my only One, chosen for Myself; I exempt Her even now from the jurisdiction of her enemies and I will assign to Her a position of

grace most eminent and incomparable, in order that there She may be nourished one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (Apos. 12, 6). That number of days the Queen was to remain in an interior and spiritual state of most exalted and extraordinary graces, which were to be more memorable and wonderful. This happened in the last years of her life, as, with the help of God, I will relate in its place. In that state She was nourished in such a divine manner, that our understanding will never be able to grasp it. And because these graces were in a certain measure the end toward which others of the life of the Queen of heaven were ordained, and, as it were, their culmination, the Evangelist makes a special mention of them.



CHAPTER IX.

THE REST OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE IS EXPLAINED.

106. "And there was a great battle in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon fought and his angels." When the Lord had manifested these things to the good and to the bad angels, the holy prince Michael and his companions, with the permission of God, gave battle to the dragon and his followers. It was a wonderful battle, for it was fought with the understanding and the will. Saint Michael, burning with zeal for the honor of God and armed with divine power and with his own humility, resisted the arrogant pride of the dragon, saying: "Worthy is the Highest of honor, praise and reverence, and of being loved, feared and obeyed by all creation. He is mighty to work whatever He desires. He that is increate and without dependence on any other being, cannot seek anything that is not most just. To us He gave grace such as we have, creating us and forming us out of nothing. He can create other beings, as many and in what manner He pleases. It is reasonable that we, submissive and prostrate in his presence, adore his Majesty and kingly grandeur. Come then, ye angels, follow me, let us adore Him, and extol his admirable and secret judgments, his most perfect and holy works. God is most exalted and above all creatures, and He would not be the Most High, if we could attain or comprehend his great works. Infinite He is in wisdom and goodness,

rich in the treasures of his benefits. As Lord of all and needing none, He can distribute them to whomsoever He wishes, and He cannot err in the selection. He can love and confer his favor to whomsoever He chooses, and He can love whom He likes; He can raise up, create and enrich according as it is his good pleasure. In all things He will be wise, holy and irresistible. Let us adore and thank Him for the wonderful work of the Incarnation which He has decreed, and for his favors to his people and for its restoration to grace after its fall. Let us adore this Person endowed with the human and the divine nature, let us reverence It and accept It as our Head; let us confess, that He is worthy of all glory, praise and magnificence, and, as the Author of grace, let us give Him glory and acknowledge his power and Divinity."

107. With such arms St. Michael and his angels gave battle, fighting as it were, with the powerful rays of truth against the dragon and his followers, who on their hand made use of blasphemies. But Lucifer at the sight of the holy prince, not being able to resist, was torn with interior rage and sought to fly from his torments; it was the will of God, however, that he should not only be punished, but also conquered, in order that by his fall he might know the truth and power of God. Nevertheless he blasphemed and cried out: "Unjust is God in raising the human nature above the angelic. I am the most exalted and beautiful angel and the triumph belongs to me. It is I who am to place my throne above the stars and who shall be like unto the Highest; I will subject myself to no one of an inferior nature, and I will not consent that any one take precedence of me or be greater than I." In the same way spoke the apostate followers of Lucifer. But St. Michael answered: "Who

is there like unto the Lord, who dwells in the heavens, or who to compare himself to Him? Be silent, enemy, cease thy dreadful blasphemies, and since iniquity has taken possession of thee, depart from our midst, wretch, and be hurled in thy blind ignorance and wickedness into the dark night and chaos of the infernal pains. But let us, O spirits of the Lord, honor and reverence this blessed Woman, who is to give human flesh to the eternal Word; and let us recognize Her as our Queen and Lady."

108. The great sign of the Woman served the good angels as a shield and as arms of battle against the evil ones; for at the sight of it, all their power of reasoning weakened and was brought to confusion and silence, since they could not endure the mysteries and sacraments contained in this sign. And just as by divine power this mysterious sign appeared, so also now the other figure or sign of the dragon appeared, in order that thus transformed he might be ignominiously hurled from heaven amid the fright and terror of his followers and amid the astonishment of the holy angels. All this was the effect of this new manifestation of the justice and power of God.

109. It is difficult to describe in words what passed in that memorable battle, since there is such a wide difference between our conceptions, founded on material objects, and those which would be appropriate to the nature and operations of such great spirits as these angels. "But the bad ones did not prevail" for injustice, lies, ignorance and malice could not prevail against equity, truth, light and goodness; nor could these virtues be overcome by vices. Therefore, it is also said: "From that time on their place was not found in heaven." Through the sins which these disgraced angels had com-

mitted, they made themselves unworthy of the eternal vision and company of the Lord. Their memory was blotted out from his mind, where they had been written by the excellences and graces of the nature given to them. Having lost the right to the places, which had been reserved for them, if they had obeyed, it passed over to mankind. To man these places were now transferred in such a way that the very vestiges of the apostate angels were blotted out and were no more found in heaven. O unhappy wickedness and never to be described misfortune, which drew after itself such a horrible and dreadful chastisement! The Evangelist adds:

110. "And the dragon was cast out, that ancient serpent who is called devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth and his angels were thrown down with him." The holy prince Michael hurled from heaven the dragon Lucifer with the invincible battle-cry: "Who is like unto God?" So powerful was this cry, that it sufficed to precipitate that proud giant and all his host to the earth and cast him in dreadful ignominy to the centre of the earth. From that time he began to be called dragon, serpent, devil and satan, imposed upon him by the holy archangel in that battle as a testimony of his iniquity and malice. Deprived of the happiness and honor, of which he had become unworthy, he was despoiled also of his names and honorable titles, acquiring in their stead such as designate his ignominy. The wicked plans which he proposed and enjoined upon his confederates, namely, that they should deceive and pervert all those that live in the world, manifest sufficiently his wickedness. He therefore, who intended to scourge the nations, was consigned to hellish regions, as Isaias says in the fourteenth chapter, to the profound abyss, and his cadaver was de-

livered to the moth and the worm of his own bad conscience; thus was fulfilled in Lucifer all that the prophet says in that chapter.

111. When the heavens had been cleared of the bad angels and the Divinity had been unveiled to the good and the obedient; when they were already admitted into glory and the bad ones chastised, then happened what the Evangelist farther says: "And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying: Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our Lord, and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night." This voice, which the Evangelist heard was that of the Word, and all the holy angels heard and listened to it. Its echoes reverberated through the infernal regions and filled with trembling and fear the demons. They did not, however, understand its mystery in full, but only so much of it, as the Most High chose to manifest to them for their greater affliction and punishment. It was the voice of the Son, who in the name of the humanity, which He was to assume, was asking the eternal Father that the salvation, power and kingdom of his Majesty, and the reign of Christ might begin; since the accuser of the brethren of the same Christ our Lord, that is, of man, had been cast out. It was like a petition before the throne of the most holy Trinity, that the salvation and power and the mysteries of the Redemption and Incarnation be put into execution. He asked that it be done so much the sooner as Lucifer, being filled with fury, envy and wrath against the human nature, which the Word was to assume, was now infesting the earth. Full of love and compassion the Word calls men his brethren. Lucifer is said to "accuse them day and night," because, both during the day in which he still

enjoyed divine grace in the presence of the eternal Father and of the holy Trinity, he belittled us in his pride, and much more, in the night of his own darkness and of our fall, he pursues us unceasingly with slander and persecution as long as this world will endure. The Word calls the works and mysteries of the Incarnation and his Death "virtue," "power" and "reign," because in them, all these really had their beginning and in them was manifested his great virtue and power against Lucifer.

112. This was the first time in which the Word in the name of his humanity interceded for men before the Divinity, and in which, according to our mode of conceiving such things, the eternal Father conferred with the other Persons of the blessed Trinity in regard to this petition. He also partly revealed to the holy angels the decree of this divine consistory, saying, in regard to the sacraments resolved upon: "Lucifer has raised the banner of pride and sin and will persecute with all his malice the whole human race. With cunning he will pervert many men, availing himself of their own passions for their destruction. In the blindness of sin and vice men will prevaricate, heedless of danger. But his lying pride, his sins and vices, are infinitely distant from our nature and wishes. We will therefore bring out the triumph of virtue and sanctity; for this purpose the second Person will assume human nature; He will exalt and teach humility, obedience and all the virtues, and thus will secure the salvation of mortals. Being true God He will become humble and submissive. He will be the Just Man, the Model and Teacher of all virtues. These alone shall be accredited before our tribunal and shall always triumph over vices. We will raise up the lowly and humble the proud (Matth. 11, 28); we will

make labors and endurance praiseworthy in our sight; we resolve to help the afflicted and the sorrowful. Let them be corrected by afflictions and thereby advance in our grace and friendship and, according to their capabilities, reach salvation in the practice of virtue. Blessed will be they that weep (Matth. 5, 3), and happy the poor and those that suffer for justice sake and for Christ, their Chief; and the insignificant ones shall be magnified, the meek of heart exalted. The peaceful shall be loved as our sons. Most dear shall those be to us, who forgive and suffer injuries and love their enemies. We will assign to them copious benedictions of our grace and an immortal glory in heaven. Our Only-begotten will put in practice these decrees, and those that follow Him shall be our chosen ones, our cherished ones; they shall be refreshed and rewarded by Us; their good works shall be engendered in our own mind, which is the first cause of all virtue. We give permission to the bad ones to oppress the good, thus helping them to gain the crown, while for themselves they increase the punishment. Let there be scandals (Matth. 18, 7) for the common good; unhappy be those that cause them, and blessed they that are proved by them. The vain and the proud will afflict and despise the humble; the great and the powerful will oppress the lowly and abject ones. They will give benediction instead of curses (I Cor. 4, 12). While they are pilgrims, they shall be rejected by men, but afterwards they shall be ranked with the angelic spirits, our sons, and they will enjoy the seats and crowns, which the unfortunate and unhappy apostates have lost. The stubborn and the proud shall be condemned to eternal death, where they will recognize their foolish proceedings and their perverseness."

113. "In order that all may have a true model and superabundant grace, if they wish to use it, the Son will descend, capable of suffering and as a Redeemer, and He shall save men (whom Lucifer defrauded of their happy state); and He shall raise them up through his infinite merits. We have resolved and determined upon the salvation of men, through a Redeemer and Teacher, who shall be able to propitiate and to teach, who shall be born and live poor, shall die despised, condemned by men to a most ignominious and frightful Death; who shall be esteemed a sinner and a criminal, and yet shall satisfy our justice for the guilt of sin. On account of his foreseen merits We will show mercy and kindness. All will understand, that those who are humble and peaceful, those that practice virtue, that suffer and yet forgive, are the followers of Christ and our sons. Nobody will be capable of entering by his own free will into our kingdom, unless he denies himself, and, taking up his cross, follows his Chief and Master (Matth. 10, 22). Our kingdom shall be composed of the perfect, who have legitimately labored and fought, persevering to the end. These will take part in the reign of our Christ, now begun and determined upon. For the accuser of his brethren has been cast down; the triumph of Christ is secured; to Him belong exaltations and glory, since He is to wash and purify men with his blood. Therefore only He shall be worthy to open the book of the law of grace (Apoc. 5, 9), He is the way, the light, the truth and the life (Joan 14, 6), through which men may come to Me. He alone shall open the gates of heaven; He shall be the Mediator (I Tim. 2, 5) and the Advocate of mortals, in Him they will have a Father, a Brother (I Joan 2, 1), and Protector after having been freed from their accuser and persecutor.

And the angels, who like true sons, have shared in the work of our salvation and power and have defended the reign of my Christ, shall likewise be honored and crowned through all the eternities of eternities in my presence."

114. This voice (which contains the mysteries hidden since the constitution of the world and manifested by the doctrine and the life of Jesus Christ), issued forth from the throne and imported more than I can explain. Through it were assigned the commissions, which the holy angels were to fulfill. Saint Michael and Saint Gabriel were appointed ambassadors of the incarnate Word and of Mary his Mother most holy; they were to be ministers for all the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. With these two princes, many other angels were assigned to the same service, as I shall explain afterward (Nos. 201-206). Other angels the Almighty appointed as companions and guardians of the souls, to teach them and inspire them with the virtues and sanctity opposed to the vices, into which Lucifer had proposed to seduce mankind. They were to guard and defend the souls and to carry them in their hands (Ps. 90, 12), in order that the just might not hurt their feet against the stones, which are the snares and the traps laid by their enemies.

115. Also other things were decreed on this occasion of which the Evangelist says that the power, salvation, virtue and kingdom of Christ began. But among the mysterious works at this time was especially the designation and enumeration of the predestined in the secret tablets of the divine mind through the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Oh the mysteries and the inexplicable secrets, which then were evolved in the bosom of God! Oh, happy lot of the chosen ones! What

can equal this in importance! What sacrament is so worthy of the Omnipotence of God! How great was the triumph of the power of Christ! Happy, infinitely happy, the members who then were assigned and united to such a Head! Oh great Church! Oh mighty people and holy congregation of such a Leader and Master! At the thought of such exalted mysteries the judgment of the creature is rendered powerless, my understanding is suspended, and my tongue becomes mute!

116. In the consistory of the three divine Persons the mysterious book spoken of in the Apocalypse was given and, as it were, delivered to the Onlybegotten of the Father; at that time it was written, closed, and sealed with the seven seals (Apoc. 5, 7), of which the Evangelist speaks. When He was made human flesh He opened it, solving in their order the seals by enacting the mysteries of his Birth, Life and Death unto the consummation of all things. That which the book contained were all the decrees of the holy Trinity after the fall of the angels; namely all that belongs to the Incarnation of the Word, and the law of grace, the ten Commandments, the seven Sacraments and all the articles of faith, and what is contained in them, the constitution of the whole militant Church. To the Word as having assumed human nature and as the High Priest and holy Pontiff (Heb. 6, 20), was given the power to communicate the necessary faculties and gifts to the Apostles and the other priests and ministers of the Church.

117. This was the mysterious beginning of the law of the Gospel. In a most secret consistory of the Trinity it was resolved and recorded in the divine mind, that those who would observe that law, shall be written in the book of life. Here was the beginning of that law and from the eternal Father the pontiffs and prelates

have their power and their vicariate. From his infinite power flows the virtues of those that are meek, poor in spirit, humble and just. This is their most humble origin, and on that account it is true to say, that he who obeys the superior obeys God (Luc. 10, 16), and he who despises them, despises God. All this was decreed and conceived in the divine mind and to Christ was given the power to open in its proper time this book of decrees, which was until then to be closed and sealed. In the meanwhile the Most High gave his testament, that is the testimonies of his divine words in the natural laws and in the written laws, accompanying them with wonderful works and manifesting a part of his secrets through the Patriarchs and Prophets.

118. Through these testimonies and through the blood of the Lamb, it is said: "They (the just) overcame him (the dragon)." For although the blood of Christ was entirely sufficient and superabundant to enable all the faithful to overcome the dragon, their accuser, and although the testimonies and teachings of the Prophets are of great power and help for eternal salvation; yet the just attain the fruit of the Passion and Redemption, by coöperating of their own free will with these divine helps, conquering their own selves and the demons, and making use of grace. They not only succeed in fulfilling the ordinary commandments and counsels of God, but they go to the extent of sacrificing their lives for the Lord (Apoc. 6, 9) in testimony of Him and in the hope of the crown and triumph promised by Christ, as the martyrs did in testimony of the faith and in defending his honor.

119. On account of all these mysteries the sacred text adds: "Therefore rejoice, O heaven, and all those that dwell therein." Rejoice, because thou art to be the

dwelling place of the just, and of their Chief, Jesus Christ, and of his most holy Mother. Rejoice, O heaven, because of all the material and inanimate creatures none obtained a better lot, for thou art to be the house of God, who will endure through the eternal ages, and thou art to receive as thy Queen the most pure and most holy Creature, that emanated from the power of the Most High. Therefore rejoice, heaven and all that dwell therein, ye angels and ye just, since you are to be the companions and ministers of the Son of the eternal Father and of his Mother, and you are to be parts of that mystical body, whose head is Christ himself. Rejoice, ye holy angels, because ministering to them and serving them by your defense and custody, you increase your accidental joy. Let the holy Archangel Michael, the prince of the celestial hosts, rejoice in particular because he defended in battle the glory of the Most High and his adorable mysteries, and because he is to be the minister of the Incarnation of the Word and a particular witness of all its effect to the end. Let all his allies and all the defenders of Jesus Christ and his Mother rejoice, since during their ministry they do not lose the joys of essential glory already their own. On account of such divine sacraments let the heavens rejoice!

CHAPTER X.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE IS CONCLUDED.

120. "Woe to the earth, and to the sea, because the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." Woe to the earth, where so many sins and such wickedness shall be perpetrated! Woe to the sea, which refused to pour forth its floods and annihilate the transgressors at the sight of so great offenses against its Creator, and to avenge the insults against its Maker and Lord! But more woe to the profound and raging sea of those that follow the demon, after he had descended in their midst in order to war against them with great wrath and with such unheard of cruelty! It is the wrath of the most ferocious dragon, and greater than that of the devouring lion (I Pet. 5, 8), who attempts to annihilate all creation and to whom all the days of the world seem a short time to execute his fury. Such is his hunger and thirst to do damage to the mortals, that all the days of their life do not satisfy him, for they come to an end, whereas he desires eternal ages, if possible, in order to wage war against the sons of God. But incomparably greater than against all others is his rage against that most blessed Woman, who was to crush his head (Gen. 3, 15). Therefore the Evangelist says:

121. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the Woman, who brought forth the Man-child." When the ancient serpent saw

the most unhappy place and state to which he had fallen, and that he was hurled from the empyrean heaven, he broke out in so much the greater rage and envy, like a wild beast tearing its own entrails. Against the Mother of the Word incarnate he conceived such a furious rage, as no human tongue or intelligence can ever describe or understand. But to a certain extent this anger can be surmised from that which followed immediately after that dragon found himself hurled with his hosts to the infernal regions. I will describe this event, as far as I can, and as far as it has been made plain to my understanding.

122. During the whole first week of the creation of the world and its contents Lucifer and the demons were occupied in machinations and projects of wickedness against the Word, who was to become incarnate, and against the Woman of whom He was to be born and made man. On the first day, which corresponds to Sunday, were created the angels; laws and precepts were given to them, for the guidance of their actions. The bad ones disobeyed and transgressed the mandates of the Lord. By divine providence and disposition then succeeded all the other events, which have been recorded above, up to the morning of the second day, corresponding to Monday, on which Lucifer and his hosts were driven and hurled into hell. The duration of these days corresponds to the small periods, or delays, which intervened between their creation, activity, contest and fall, or glorification. As soon as Lucifer with his followers entered hell, they assembled in general council, which lasted to the morning of Thursday. During this time Lucifer exerted all his astuteness and diabolical malice in conferring with the demons and concocting plans to offend God so much the more deeply, and to obtain re-

venge for the chastisement, to which he had been subjected. They came to the conclusion and resolved that the greatest vengeance and injury against God would be to impede the effects of the love, which they knew God bore toward mankind. This they hoped to attain by deceiving men, and persuading them, or even, as far as possible, compelling them to neglect the friendship of God, to be ungrateful toward Him, and to rebel against his will.

123. "This we must strive to do," said Lucifer, "toward this end we must apply all our forces, all our solicitude and knowledge. We will subject the human creatures to our influence and will, in order to destroy them. We will persecute this race of men and will deprive them of the reward promised to them. We will exert all our vigilance, to prevent them from arriving at the vision of God, which was denied us unjustly. I will gain great triumphs over them; I will destroy them all and subject them to my designs. I will sow new sects and errors, and set up laws contrary to those of the Most High in all things. I will raise up from among men false prophets and leaders, who will spread these doctrines (Act 20, 30) and I will scatter this seed through them and afterwards I will assign to them a place in these profound torments. I will afflict the poor, oppress the afflicted, and persecute the timid. I will sow discord, excite wars, and stir up nations against each other. I will raise up proud and haughty men to extend the dominion of sin and after they shall have executed my designs, I will bury them in this eternal fire, and in so much the greater torments, the more faithfully they followed me. This is my kingdom and this is the reward which I will give to those who follow me."

124. "I will wage fierce war against the incarnate

Word, for although He is God, He is also man, and therefore of a lower nature than mine. I will exalt my throne and my dignity above his; I will conquer Him and will humble Him by my power and astuteness. The Woman who is to be his Mother shall perish at my hands. What is one Woman against my power and greatness? And you, ye demons, who were injured together with me, follow me and obey me in the pursuit of this vengeance, as you have followed me in disobedience! Pretend to love men, in order to destroy them; serve them, in order to ruin them and deceive them; help them, in order to pervert them and draw them into these my hellish regions." No human tongue can explain the malice and fury of this first council of Lucifer and his hosts against the human race, which although not yet in existence, was to be created. In it were concocted all the vices and sins of the world, thence proceeded lies, sects and errors; all iniquity had its origin in that chaos and in that abominable gathering, and all those that do evil are in the service of the prince of this assembly.

125. Having closed this meeting, Lucifer sought permission to speak with God, and his Majesty, for his own exalted ends, gave him permission. This was allowed in the same manner in which satan spoke to God when he asked permission to persecute Job (Job 1, 6), and it happened on the day which corresponds to our Thursday. He addressed the Most High in the following words: "Lord, since Thou hast laid thy hand so heavily upon me in chastising me with so great cruelty, and since Thou hast predetermined all that Thou desirest to do for the men whom Thou art to create; and since Thou wishest to exalt and elevate so high the incarnate Word and enrich the Woman, who is to be his Mother, with all thy predestined gifts, be now equitable and just;

as Thou hast given me permission to persecute the rest of men, give me also permission to tempt and make war against Christ, the Man-God and the Woman, who is to be his Mother; give me freedom to exert all my powers against Them." Other things Lucifer said on that occasion, and, in spite of the great violence occasioned to his pride by the humiliation, he humbled himself nevertheless in order to ask for this permission. His wrathful anxiety to obtain what he desired was so great that he was willing to subdue even his arrogance, thus forcing one iniquity to yield to another. He knew too well that without the permission of the omnipotent Lord he could attempt nothing. In order to be able to tempt Christ our Lord, and his most holy Mother in particular, he was willing to humiliate himself a thousand times, for he feared the threat, which had been made, that She should crush his head.

126. The Lord answered: "Thou must not, satan, ask such a permission as due to thee in justice, for the incarnate Word is God and Lord most high and omnipotent, though He is at the same time true man, and thou art his creature. Even if the other men sin and subject themselves to thy will, this will not be possible in my Onlybegotten made man. Though thou mayest succeed in making men slaves of sin, Christ will be holy and just, segregated from sinners. He will redeem them, if they fall. And this Woman against whom thou hast such wrath, although She is to be a mere creature and a true daughter of man, is to be preserved by my decree from sin. She is to be altogether mine forever and on no account or title shall any one else be allowed to have part in Her."

127. To this satan replied: "But what wonder that this Woman should be holy, since no one on this earth

will be allowed to draw Her to the contrary, or persecute Her and incite Her to sin? This cannot be equity, nor just judgment, nor can this be proper and praiseworthy." Lucifer added yet other blasphemies in his arrogance. But the Most High, who disposes all things with wisdom, answered him: "I will give thee permission to tempt Christ, so that He will be an example and a teacher in this to all the rest of men. I also give thee permission to persecute the Woman, but thou must not touch Her in regard to the life of her body. It is my will, that Christ and his Mother be not exempt from temptation, and that They be tempted by thee like the rest of men." This permission was more pleasing to the dragon than that of being free to persecute all the rest of the human race. In this he resolved to use more care than in the pursuit of any other project, as afterwards really happened. To no one else than himself was he resolved to confide its execution. Therefore the Evangelist proceeds to say:

128. "He persecuted the Woman, who brought forth the man-child." For with the permission of the Lord, he waged unheard of war and persecution against Her, whom he thought to be the Mother of God incarnate. But since these persecutions and battles will be described later (No. 692-697, Part II 340-71; III 451-528), I will only say here, that they were beyond all conception of man. Equally admirable, was her glorious resistance and victory over them. Therefore in order to describe the manner in which She defended Herself, he says: "There were given to her two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times." These two wings were given to the most holy Virgin before She entered upon the combat, for She was prepared by

special gifts and favors. The one wing was an infused science, which revealed anew to Her vast mysteries and sacraments; the other was a new and sublime humility, as will be explained in its place (Part II 335-339, Part III 448-450). With these two wings She took her flight to the Lord, her proper habitation, for in Him alone She lived and in Him was centered all her attention. She flew like the royal eagle, without ever directing her flight towards the enemy, being alone in her flight and living in seclusion from all earthly things, solely in communion with her last End, which is the Divinity. In this solitude She "was nourished for a time and times," for though this nourishment lasted all her life, yet it was more abundant in the times of her great battles with satan. In those times She received favors more proportioned to the greatness of the conflict. By "time and times" is also understood the felicity, by which her victories were rewarded and crowned.

129. "And half a time from the face of the serpent." This half a time was that, in which the most holy Virgin was free from the persecution of the dragon and far from his sight during this life; for, having conquered him in her battles, She was, by divine providence and as Victress, freed from them. This freedom was conceded to Her in order that She might enjoy the peace and quiet, which She had merited after having conquered the enemy, as I will describe farther on (Part III, 526). Concerning the time of the combat the Evangelist says:

130. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water, as it were, a river, that he might cause her to be carried away; and the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the

river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth." All his malice and all his forces Lucifer exerted and directed against the Mistress; for all those, who were ever tempted by him, seemed to him of less importance than most holy Mary. With the same force as the current of a great swift river, so the malice, and the lies, and the temptations flowed from the mouth of that dragon against Her. But the earth helped Her; for the earth of her body and of her inclinations was not cursed, nor did the sentence and punishment, which God hurled against Adam and Eve, touch Her in any way. For in it our earth is cursed and produces thorns instead of fruit. It is wounded in its very nature by its inclination to sin—"fomes Peccati" (Gen. 3, 17), which continues to assault us and causes opposition. The devil avails himself of these inclinations for the ruin of men, for he finds within us arms for his offensive warfare; and catering to our evil inclinations by his false representations and apparent sweetness and delight, he draws us toward sensible and earthly things.

131. But the most blessed Mary, the holy and sanctified earth without touch of bad inclinations or evil dispositions, was free from all danger of corruption arising from the earth. On the contrary, since all her inclinations were most orderly, composed and obedient to grace, the earth of her body was in perfect harmony with her soul. Thus this earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the stream of temptations which the dragon raised up for Her in vain; for he found that material indisposed and unfomented for sin, unlike the other offspring of Adam. Their terrestrial and disorderly passions are more adapted to produce the floods of temptation, than to absorb them, since our passions and our corrupt nature are always in opposition to virtue.

On account of the futility of his efforts against this mysterious Woman, Scripture says:

132. "And the dragon was angry against the Woman: and he went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The dragon, having been gloriously overcome in all things by the Queen of all creation and dreading the furious torments of his own confusion and the ruin of all hell power, fled from Her, determined to make cruel war against the other souls belonging to the generation and race of the most blessed Mother. These are the faithful, who are marked with the testimony and the blood of Christ in Baptism as keepers of his commands and constant witnesses. For all the wrath of the demon turned so much the more toward the holy Church and its members, when he saw, that he would be unable to gain any advantage over Christ and his most holy Mother. Especially does he war against the virgins of Christ, and with a more particular hatred does he seek to destroy the virtue of virginity or chastity, this being the seed and the inheritance of the most chaste Virgin and Mother of the Lamb. On account of all this the Evangelist says:

133. "And he stood upon the sands of the sea." This is the contemptible vanity of the world, on which the dragon feeds and which he eats like hay. All this passed in heaven and many mysteries were made manifest to the angels in the decrees of the divine Will regarding the privileges reserved for the Mother of the Incarnate Word." I have been short in describing what I saw; for the multitude of the mysteries has made me poor and halting in the words needful for their manifestation.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS THE LORD HAD BEFORE HIS MIND CHRIST OUR LORD AND HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER. HE CHOSE HIS PEOPLE AND HEAPED HIS BENEFITS ON THEM.

134. In the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, Wisdom says of Itself, that It was present in the Creation, ordering all things conjointly with the Almighty (Prov. 8, 30). And I said above (No. 54) that this Wisdom is the incarnate Word, who with his most holy Mother was present, in spirit, when God resolved upon the creation of the whole world; for in that instant the Son was not only coexistent in divine essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but also the human nature, which He was to assume, was foreseen and conceived as the prototype of all works in the divine mind of the Father. Conjointly with Him was also foreseen as present the human nature of his most holy Mother, who was to conceive Him in her most pure womb. In these two Persons were foreseen all his works, so that on account of Them (speaking in a human way) He overlooked all that could offend Him in the conduct of the men and angels that were to fall; for the conduct of the latter was an inducement rather to desist from the creation of the human race and of the things that were to subserve for their use.

135. The Most High looked upon his Son and upon his most holy Mother as models, produced in the culmination of his wisdom and power, in order that They

might serve as prototypes according to which He was to copy the whole human race. Thus the rest of men depended on these Two as Mediators between themselves and God. He created also the necessary material beings required for human life, but with such wisdom, that some of them also serve as symbols, to represent in a certain way these two Beings, which He primarily intended and to which all others were to be subservient, namely, Christ and most holy Mary. On this account He made the luminaries of heaven, the sun and the moon (Gen. 1, 16) so that in dividing the day and the night, they might symbolize the Sun of justice, Christ, and his most holy Mother, who is beautiful as the moon (Cant. 6, 9), for these Two divide the day of grace and the night of sin. The sun illuminates the moon; and both, together with the stars of the firmament, illumine all other creatures within the confines of the universe.

136. He created the rest of the beings and added to their perfection, because they were to be subservient to Christ and most holy Mary, and through them to the rest of men. Before the universe proceeded from its nothingness, He set it as a banquet abundant and unfailing, and more memorable than the feast of Assuerus (Esther 1, 3); for He was to create man for his delight and to draw him to the enjoyment of his knowledge and love. Like a most courteous and bounteous Lord He did not wish that the invited guests should wait, but that both the creation and the invitation to the banquet of his knowledge and love be one and the same act. Man was not to lose any time in that which concerned him so much: namely, to know and to praise his almighty Maker.

137. On the sixth day he formed and created Adam, as it were of the age of thirty-three years. This was

the age in which Christ was to suffer death, and Adam in regard to his body was so like unto Christ, that scarcely any difference existed. Also according to the soul Adam was similar to Christ. From Adam God formed Eve so similar to the Blessed Virgin, that she was like unto Her in personal appearance and in figure. God looked upon these two images of the great Originals with the highest pleasure and benevolence, and on account of the Originals He heaped many blessings upon them, as if He wanted to entertain Himself with them and their descendants until the time should arrive for forming Christ and Mary.

138. But the happy state in which God had created the parents of the human race lasted only a very short while. The envy of the serpent was immediately aroused against them, for satan was impatiently awaiting their creation, and no sooner were they created, than his hatred became active against them. However, he was not permitted to witness the formation of Adam and Eve, as he had witnessed the creation of all other things: for the Lord did not choose to manifest to him the creation of man, nor the formation of Eve from a rib; all these things were concealed from him for a space of time until both of them were joined. But when the demon saw the admirable composition of the human nature, perfect beyond that of any other creature, the beauty of the souls and also of the bodies of Adam and Eve; when he saw the paternal love with which the Lord regarded them, and how He made them the lords of all creation, and that He gave them hope of eternal life: the wrath of the dragon was lashed to fury, and no tongue can describe the rage with which that beast was filled, nor how great was his envy and his desire to take the life of these two beings. Like an enraged lion he certainly would

have done so, if he had not known, that a superior force would prevent him. Nevertheless he studied and plotted out some means, which would suffice to deprive them of the grace of the Most High and make them God's enemies.

139. Here Lucifer was deceived; for the Lord had from the beginning mysteriously manifested to him, that the Word was to assume human nature in the womb of the most holy Mary, but not how and when; and thus He had also concealed the creation of Adam and the formation of Eve, in order that Lucifer might from the beginning labor under his ignorance concerning the mystery and the time of the Incarnation. As his wrath and his watchfulness had thus been so signally forestalled in regard to Christ and Mary, he suspected that Adam had come forth from Eve, and that She was the Mother and Adam the incarnate Word. His suspicions grew, when he felt the divine power, which prevented him from harming the life of these creatures. On the other hand he soon became aware of the precepts of God, for these did not remain concealed from him, since he heard their conversation in regard to them. Being freed more and more from his doubt as he listened to the words of the first parents and sized up their natural gifts, he began to follow them like a roaring lion (I Pet. 5, 8), seeking an entrance through those inclinations, which he found in each of them. Nevertheless, until he was undeceived in the course of the Redemption, he continued to hesitate between his wrath against Christ and Mary and the dread of being overcome by Them. Most of all he dreaded the confusion of being conquered by the Queen of heaven, who was to be a mere creature and not God.

140. Taking courage therefore in the precept, which was given to Adam and Eve, and having prepared the

snare, Lucifer entered with all his energy upon the work of entrapping them and of opposing and hindering the execution of the divine Will. He first approached the woman, and not the man, because he knew her to be by nature more frail and weak, and because in tempting her he would be more certain that it was not Christ whom he was encountering. Against her also he was more enraged ever since he had seen the sign in the heaven and since the threat, which God had made in it against him. On all these accounts his wrath was greater against Eve than against Adam. Before he showed himself to her, however, he aroused in her many disturbing thoughts or imaginations, in order to approach her in a state of excitement and pre-occupation. But because I have written about this in another place, I will not enlarge here upon the violence and inhumanity of this temptation; it is enough for my purpose to mention what Scripture says: that he took the form of a serpent (Gen. 3, 1), and thus speaking to Eve drew her into a conversation, which she should not have permitted. Listening to him and answering, she began to believe him; then she violated the command of God, and finally persuaded her husband likewise to transgress the precept. Thus ruin overtook them and all the rest: for themselves and for us they lost the happy position, in which God had placed them.

141. When Lucifer saw the two fallen and their interior beauty and grace and original justice changed into the ugliness of sin, he celebrated his triumph with incredible joy and vaunting in the company of his demons. But he soon fell from his proud boasting, when he saw, contrary to his expectations, how kindly the merciful love of God dealt with the delinquents, and how He offered them a chance of doing penance by giv-

ing them hope of pardon and return of grace. Moreover he saw how they were disposing themselves toward this forgiveness by sorrow and contrition, and how the beauty of grace was restored to them. When the demons perceived the effect of contrition, all hell was again in confusion. His consternation grew, when he heard the sentence, which God pronounced against the guilty ones, in which he himself was implicated. More especially and above all was he tormented by the repetition of that threat: The Woman shall crush thy head (Gen. 3, 15), which he had already heard in heaven.

142. The offspring of Eve multiplied after the fall and so arose the distinction and the multiplication of the good and the bad, the elect and the reprobate, the ones following Christ the Redeemer, and the others following satan. The elect cling to their Leader by faith, humility, charity, patience and all the virtues and in order to obtain victory, they are assisted, helped and beautified by the divine grace and the gifts, which the Redeemer and Lord of all merited for them. But the reprobate, without receiving any such benefits from their false leader, or earning any other reward than the eternal pain and the confusion of hell, follow him in pride, presumption, obscenity and wickedness, being led into these disorders by the father of lies and the originator of sin.

143. Notwithstanding all this the Most High, in his ineffable kindness, gave our first parents his benediction, in order that the human race might grow and multiply (Gen. 4, 3). The most high Providence permitted, that Eve, in the unjust Cain, should bring forth a type of the evil fruits of sin, and in the innocent Abel, both in figure and in imitation, the type of Christ our Lord. For in the first just one the law and doctrine of Christ began to exert its effects. All the rest of the just were

to follow it, suffering for justice sake (Matth. 10, 22), hated and persecuted by the sinners and the reprobate and by their own brothers. Accordingly, patience, humility and meekness began to appear in Abel, and in Cain, envy and all wickedness, for the benefit of the just and for his own perdition. The wicked triumph and the good suffer, exhibiting the spectacle, which the world in its progress shows to this day, namely, the Jerusalem of the godfearing and the Babylon of the godforsaken, each with its own leader and head.

144. The Most High also wished that the first Adam should be the type of the second in the manner of their creation; for, just as before the creation of the first, He created and ordered for him the republic of all the beings, of which he was to be the lord and head; so before the appearance of his Onlybegotten, He allowed many ages to pass by, in order that his Son might, in the multiplied numbers of the human race, find prepared for Himself a people, of which He was to be the Head, the Teacher, and the King. He was not to be even for a moment without a people and without followers: such is the wonderful harmony and order, in which the divine wisdom disposed all things, making that later in the execution, which was first in the intention.

145. As the world progressed in its course, in order that the Word might descend from the bosom of the Father and clothe Itself in our mortality, God selected and prepared a chosen and most noble people, the most admirable of past and future times. Within it also He constituted a most illustrious and holy race, from which He was to descend according to the flesh. I will not linger in detailing the genealogy of Christ our Lord, for the account of the holy Evangelists has made that unnecessary. I will only say, in praise of the Most

High, that He has shown to me many times the incomparable love, which He bore toward his people, the favors shown to it, and the mysteries and holy Sacraments, which He entrusted to it, as was afterwards made manifest through his holy Church. For at no time has slept nor slumbered He, who has constituted Himself the watcher of Israel (Ps. 120, 4).

146. He reared most holy Prophets and Patriarchs, who in figures and prophecies announced to us from far off, that, which we have now in possession. He wishes us to venerate them, knowing how they esteemed the law of grace and how earnestly they yearned and prayed for it. To this people God manifested his immutable Essence by many revelations, and they again transmitted these revelations to us by the holy Scriptures, containing immense mysteries, which we grasp and learn to know by faith. All of them, however, are brought to perfection and are made certain by the incarnate Word, who transmitted to us the secure rule of faith and the nourishment of the sacred Scriptures in his Church. Although the Prophets and the just ones of that people were not so far favored as to see Christ in his body, they nevertheless experienced the liberality of the Lord, who manifested Himself to them by prophecies and who moved their hearts to pray for his coming and for the Redemption of the whole human race. The consonance and harmony of all these prophecies, mysteries and aspirations of the ancient fathers, were a sweet music to the Most High, which resounded in the secret recesses of the Divinity and which regaled and shortened the time (to speak in a human manner) until He should descend to converse with man.

147. In order not to be detained too much in that, which the Lord has revealed to me regarding this and in

order to arrive at the preparations, which the Lord made for sending to the world the incarnate Word and His most holy Mother, I will rehearse these mysteries succinctly according to the order given in the holy Scriptures. Genesis contains that which concerns the beginning and the creation of the world for the human race; the division of the earth, the chastisement and the restoration, the confusion of tongues, and the origin of the chosen race, humbled in Egypt; and the many other great sacraments revealed to Moses by God, in order that we may be led to know his love and the justice towards men from the beginning drawing them to his knowledge and service, and to foreshadow that, which He has resolved to do in the future.

148. The book of Exodus contains what happened in Egypt with the chosen people, the plagues and punishments, which God sent in order to rescue them; their departure and march through the sea; the written law given with such great preparations and wonders; and many other great sacraments, which the Lord provided for his people, visiting now their enemies, now themselves with afflictions, chastising their enemies with the severity of a Judge, correcting the Israelites with the benignity of a Father and teaching them to appreciate his benefits by sending severe hardships. He worked great wonders with the staff of Moses, which prefigured the cross on which the incarnate Word was to be sacrificed as the Lamb, a salvation to many, a ruin to others (Luc. 2, 34). It was like the staff of Moses, and like the Red Sea, the waves of which shielded the people and annihilated the Egyptians. Thus he filled the lives of the saints with joys and sorrows, with hardships and with comforts; with infinite wisdom and providence He symbolized in them the life and the death of Christ our Lord.

149. In the book of the Levites He describes and ordains many sacrifices and ceremonies of the law for placating the Divinity; for they were to point out the Lamb, which was to be immolated for all men; and they pointed out also ourselves, immolated to the Majesty of God in reality, as was prefigured in these sacrifices. It also describes the vestments of Aaron, the highpriest and type of Christ, although Christ was not to be of that inferior order but of the order of Melchisedech (Ps. 120, 4).

150. The book of Numbers describes the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, prefiguring what was to happen with the holy Church, with the Onlybegotten as man, and with his most holy Mother; and also with the rest of the just, who, in different aspects, were prefigured in the column of fire, in the manna, in the rock giving forth water. It contains also other great mysteries, which are comprehended in the events there recorded, likewise the mysteries pertaining to numbers, in all of which deep secrets are hidden.

151. Deuteronomy is like a second law, a repetition of the first, but given in a different way and prefiguring more closely the law of the Gospels. For as according to the hidden judgments of God and according to the propriety known to his wisdom, the Incarnation of the Son was to be deferred, He renewed and rearranged these laws in order that they might be more like to those, which He was to establish for his Onlybegotten.

152. Josue or Jesus Nave conducts the people of God into the promised land; he divides the Jordan to allow the passage of the multitudes, achieves great things, typifying plainly the Redeemer as well in name as in deed. His history represents the destruction of the kingdom of the devil, the separation and the division of the good and bad, which will happen in the last day.

153. After Josue, when the people had already come into the possession of the promised and wished-for land, which primarily and appropriately signifies the Church acquired by Jesus Christ through the price of his blood, comes the book of the Judges. These were ordained by God for the government of his people, especially during the wars, which on account of their sins and idolatries were waged against them by the Philistines and other neighboring enemies. From these God freed and delivered them, whenever they returned to God by penance and amendment of life. In it are also related the deeds of Deborah while judging the people and liberating them from great oppression; also those of Jahel, who helped them to victory, mighty and courageous women both. All these deeds of history prefigure and illustrate what was to happen in the Church.

154. After the generation of the Judges came the Kings, for whom the Israelites petitioned in their desire of imitating the government of the surrounding nations. These books contain great mysteries concerning the coming of the Messias. Heli, the priest, and Saul, the king, prefigure in their death the reprobation of the old law. Sadoc and David, typify the new reign and priesthood of Christ and also the Church with the small number, which were to belong to it in comparison to the rest of men in the world. The other kings of Israel and Juda and their captivities presignify other great mysteries of the holy Church.

155. During the aforesaid times lived the most patient Job, whose words are so mysterious, that there is not one without its profound sacramental meaning concerning the life of Christ our Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment in the same flesh, in which each one lives, and concerning the violence and astuteness of

the demons and their warfare against men. Above all has God placed him as an example of patience for us mortals, for in him we all may learn how we are to bear our adversities; especially as we have before our eyes the death of Christ, whereas this saint saw Him only at such a distance and yet imitated Him so closely.

156. In the writings of the many and great Prophets moreover, which God sent in the time of the kings to provide for special necessities, not one of the great mysteries and sacraments pertaining to the coming of the Messiah and his law, remained undeclared or unrevealed. The same thing, although more at a distance, God accomplished in the ancient Fathers and Patriarchs. In all this He only multiplied the likenesses, and, as it were, the patterns of the incarnate Word, and prearranged and prepared for Him a people, and the law, which He was to teach.

157. In the three great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He deposited great and precious pledges calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He wished to honor Himself in the name at the same time that He honored them, manifesting his dignity and his excellent virtues and sacraments, and confiding them to their care, in order that they might furnish so honorable a name to God. The patriarch Abraham, in order to prefigure vividly, that which the eternal Father was to do with his Onlybegotten, was tempted and tried by the command to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22, 1). When, however, this obedient father was about to complete the sacrifice, the same Lord, who had given the commandment, impeded its execution; for such a heroic sacrifice was to be reserved to the eternal Father, who alone was to sacrifice in effect his Onlybegotten: only in a symbolic manner can Abraham be said to have done

the same: for thus it will appear, that the zeal of divine love is (Cant. 8, 6) strong as death. It was not however beseeming, that such an expressive figure should remain altogether unaccomplished and therefore the sacrifice of Abraham was fulfilled by the killing of a ram, being likewise a figure of the Lamb, which was to pay for the sins of the world (Joan 1, 29).

158. To Jacob was shown that mysterious ladder, full of sacraments and hidden import (Gen. 28, 12), principally to represent the incarnate Word as the way and the means of ascending to the Father, and of his descending to us. On it also ascend and descend the angels, who illuminate and guide us, bearing us up in their hands, so that we may not stumble over the rocks of the errors, heresies, and vices, with which the path of mortal life is strewn (Ps. 90, 12). In the midst of them we pass securely up this stairs in the faith and hope of his holy Church, which is the house of the Lord, the portal of heaven and holiness.

159. In order to make him the god of Pharao and the leader of his people He showed to Moses the mystical thornbush, which burned without being consumed and which foreshadowed the Divinity covered with our humanity, leaving the Divinity intact by the humanity and the humanity unconsumed by the Divinity. At the same time it also signified the perpetual virginity of the Mother of the Word, not only of her body, but of her soul, so that, although She was a daughter of Adam and came vested in the sin-tainted nature derived from Adam, She nevertheless was without stain or offense.

160. He raised also for Himself David according to his own heart (I Reg. 13, 14), who worthily sang the praise of the Most High, comprehending in his Psalms all the sacraments and mysteries not only of the law of

grace, but of the written and natural law. And the testimonies, judgments and works of the Lord, which were pronounced by his lips, David also treasured up in his heart, meditating on them day and night. In pardoning his enemies, he was an express image and figure of God forgiving us. Thus all his promises concerning the coming of the Redeemer were made more certain to the world.

161. Solomon, the king of peace, was an image of the King of kings; for by his great wisdom he manifested in different kinds of writings the sacraments and mysteries of Christ, especially in the similitudes of the Canticles. For there he exposed the mysteries of the incarnate Word, of his most holy Mother, of his Church and of the faithful. He taught also right behavior in different ways, opening up a fountain of truth and life-giving knowledge for many other writers.

162. But who can worthily exalt the benefits He provided for his people in the praiseworthy host of holy Prophets, through whom the Lord has spread the light of prophecy, lighting up as from afar the holy Church, and commencing in advance to shed the rays of the Sun of justice and of the efficacious law of grace? The two great Prophets, Isaias and Jeremias, were chosen to preach to us, in a sweet and exalted manner, the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word, his Birth, Life and Death. Isaias promised us, that a Virgin should conceive and give birth to a Son, who would call himself Emmanuel; that a little son shall be born to us, who shall bear his kingdom on his shoulder (Is. 7, 14; 9, 6). All the rest of the life of the Christ he proclaims with such clearness, that his prophecies are like a gospel. Jeremias announces the unheard of wonder, that God will cause a Woman to bear in her womb a man, who

is at the same time to be a God and perfect man, who alone can be Christ (Jer. 31, 22). He announced his coming, his passion, ignominy and death (Thren. 3, 28). Wonder and suspense fill me in the consideration of these prophets. Isaias asks the Lord to send the Lamb, which is to rule the world from the rocks of the desert to the mountain of the daughter of Sion; for this Lamb, the incarnate Word, calls the heavens a desert, where as God He dwelt without the society of men (Is. 16, 1). He calls Him rock, on account of the stability of his throne and of the unaltered rest of eternity which He enjoys. The mountain, from which He is asked to come, is in the mystical sense, the holy Church and first of all, the most holy Mary, the Daughter of the vision of peace, that is Sion. The prophet interposes Her as the Mediatrix, to induce the eternal Father to send his Onlybegotten, the Lamb. For in all the rest of the human race there was nothing to influence Him so much as to have Her as his Mother, who was to clothe Him with the spotless fleece of the most holy humanity. All this is contained in that most sweet prayer and prophecy of Isaias.

163. Ezekiel also saw this Virgin Mother in the figure and likeness of the closed gate (Ezekiel 44, 2), which was open only for the God of Israel and through which no other man could enter. Habacuc contemplates Christ our Lord on the cross and in most profound words prophesies the mysteries of the Redemption and the wonderful effects of the passion and death of our Redeemer (Hab. 3). Joel describes the land of the twelve tribes, prefiguring the apostles, who were to be the heads of all the sons of the Church. He also announces the descent of the Holy Ghost upon his servants and handmaids, foretelling the time of the coming, and of the

life of Christ. And all the other prophets announced in part the same thing, for God wished all his great works to be announced, prophesied and prefigured far in advance and so completely, that they might testify the love and care, which He had for men and with which He enriched his Church. He wished also to reprehend us and convict us of our lukewarmness, since these ancient Fathers and Prophets, seeing only the shadows and figures, were inflamed with divine love and broke forth in canticles of praise and exaltation of the Lord, whereas we, who enjoy the truth and the bright day of grace, remain buried in fortgetfulness of so great benefits, and, forsaking the light, continue to seek the darkness.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW, AFTER THE HUMAN RACE HAD BEEN PROPAGATED, THE CLAMORS OF THE JUST FOR THE COMING OF THE REDEEMER INCREASED, AND LIKEWISE SIN; IN THIS NIGHT OF THE ANCIENT LAW, GOD SENT TWO MORNINGSTARS AS HARBINGERS OF THE LAW OF GRACE.

164. The posterity and race of Adam spread out in great numbers, for the just and the unjust were multiplied; likewise did increase the clamors of the just for the Redeemer, and the transgressions of the wicked in demerit of that benefit. The people of the Most High and the plans for the triumph of the Lord in assuming human nature, were already in the last stages of preparation for the advent of the Messias. The kingdom of sin in the generation of the wicked had now spread its dominion to the utmost limits and the opportune time for the remedy had arrived. The merits and the crowns of the just had been multiplied, the Prophets and the holy Fathers in the joy of heavenly enlightenment perceived the approach of the salvation and the presence of the Redeemer, and they increased their clamors, beseeching God to fulfill the prophecies and the promises made to his people. Before the high throne of the divine mercy they asked God to remember the prolix and sombre night of sin which had lasted since the creation of the first man, and the blindness of idolatry, which had taken hold of all the rest of the human race.

165. When the ancient serpent had infected the whole earth with its poisonous breath and apparently enjoyed

peaceful control over mortals who had become blind to the light of reason (Rom. 1, 20) and to the precepts contained in the ancient written law, when, instead of seeking the true Divinity, men set up for themselves many false laws and each one created a god for himself according to his liking, without considering, that the confusion of so many gods was repugnant to all goodness, order, and peace, when by these errors malice, ignorance and forgetfulness of the true God had become naturalized; when, ignorant of its mortal disease and lethargy, the world had grown mute in its prayer for deliverance; when pride reigned supreme and fools had become innumerable (Eccles. 7, 15); when Lucifer in his arrogance was about to swallow the pure waters of the Jordan (Job 40, 18): when through these injuries God was more and more deeply offended and less and less beholden to man; when his justice had such an excellent cause for annihilating all creation and reducing it to its original nothingness:

166. At this Juncture (according to our way of understanding), the Most High directed his attention to the attribute of his mercy, counterbalanced the weight of his incomprehensible justice with the law of clemency, and chose to yield more to his own goodness, to the clamors and faithful services of the just and the prophets of his people, than to his indignation at the wickedness and sins of all the rest of mankind. In this dark night of the ancient law, He resolved to give most certain pledges of the day of grace, sending into the world two most bright luminaries to announce the approaching dawn of the sun of Justice, Christ our Salvation. These were saint Joachim and Anne, prepared and created by especial decree according to his own heart. Saint Joachim had his home, his family and relations in

Nazareth, a town of Galilee. He, always a just and holy man and illumined by especial grace and light from on high, had a knowledge of many mysteries of the holy Scriptures and of the olden Prophets. In continual and fervent prayer he asked of God the fulfillment of his promises, and his faith and charity penetrated the heavens. He was a man most humble and pure, leading a most holy and sincere life, yet he was most grave and earnest, and incomparably modest and honest.

167. The most fortunate Anne had a house in Bethlehem and was a most chaste, humble and beautiful maiden. From her childhood she led a most virtuous, holy and retired life, enjoying great and continual enlightenment in exalted contemplation. Withal she was most diligent and industrious, thus attaining perfection in both the active and the contemplative life. She had an infused knowledge of the divine Scriptures and a profound understanding of its hidden mysteries and sacraments. In the infused virtues of faith, hope and love she was unexcelled. Equipped with all these gifts, she continued to pray for the coming of the Messias. Her prayers were so acceptable to the Lord, that to her He could but answer with the words of the Spouse: "Thou hast wounded my heart with one of the hairs of thy neck" (Cant. 4, 9). Therefore, without doubt, saint Anne holds a high position among the saints of the old Testament, who by their merits hastened the coming of the Redeemer.

168. This woman also prayed most fervently, that the Almighty deign to procure for her in matrimony a husband, who should help her to observe the ancient law and testament, and to be perfect in the fulfillment of all its precepts. At the moment in which saint Anne thus prayed to the Lord, his Providence ordained, that saint

Joachim made the same petition: both prayers were presented at the same time before the tribunal of the holy Trinity, where they were heard and fulfilled, it being then and there divinely disposed, that Joachim and Anne unite in marriage and become the parents of Her, who was to be the Mother of the incarnate God. In furtherance of this divine decree the archangel Gabriel was sent to announce it to them both. To saint Anne he appeared in visible form, while she was engaged in fervent prayer for the coming of the Savior and the Redeemer of men. When she saw the holy prince, most beautiful and refulgent, she was disturbed and frightened and yet at the same time interiorly rejoiced and enlightened. The holy maiden prostrated herself in profound humility to reverence the messenger of heaven; but he prevented and encouraged her, as being destined to be the ark of the true manna, Mary most holy, Mother of the Word. For this holy angel had been informed of this sacramental mystery on being sent with this message. The other angels did not yet know of it, as this revelation or illumination had been given directly from God only to Gabriel. Nevertheless the angel did not then manifest this great sacrament to St. Anne; but he asked her to attend and said to her: "The Most High give thee his blessing, servant of God, and be thy salvation. His Majesty has heard thy petitions and He wishes thee to persevere therein and that thou continue to clamor for the coming of the Redeemer. It is his will, that thou accept Joachim as thy spouse, for he is a man of upright heart and acceptable to the Lord: in his company thou wilt be able to persevere in the observance of his law and in his service. Continue thy prayers and thy supplications and be not solicitous for anything else, for the Lord will see them fulfilled. Walk in the straight paths

of justice and let thy soul's converse be in heaven. Continuing to pray for the Messias, be thou joyful in the Lord, who is thy salvation." With these words the angel disappeared, leaving her enlightened in many mysteries of holy Scriptures, and comforted and renewed in spirit.

169. To saint Joachim the archangel did not appear in a corporeal manner, but he spoke to the man of God in sleep as follows: "Joachim, be thou blessed by the right hand of the Most High! Persevere in thy desires and live according to rectitude and perfection. It is the will of the Almighty, that thou receive saint Anne as thy spouse, for her the Lord has visited with his blessing. Take care of her and esteem her as a pledge of the most High and give thanks to his Majesty, because he has given her into thy charge." In consequence of this divine message saint Joachim immediately asked for the hand of the most chaste Anne and, in joint obedience to the divine ordainment, they espoused each other. But neither of them manifested to each other the secret of what had happened until several years afterwards, as I will relate in its place (Part I, 184). The two holy spouses lived in Nazareth, continuing to walk in the justification of the Lord. In rectitude and sincerity they practiced all virtue in their works, making themselves very acceptable and pleasing to the Most High and avoiding all blemish in all their doings. The rents and incomes of their estate they divided each year into three parts. The first one they offered to the temple of Jerusalem for the worship of the Lord; the second they distributed to the poor, and the third they retained for the decent sustenance of themselves and family. God augmented their temporal goods on account of their generosity and charity.

170. They themselves lived with each other in undisturbed peace and union of heart, without quarrel or shadow of a grudge. The most humble Anne subjected herself and conformed herself in all things to the will of Joachim: and that man of God, with equal emulation of humility, sought to know the desires of holy Anne, confiding in her with his whole heart (Prov. 31, 11), and he was not deceived. Thus they lived together in such perfect charity, that during their whole life they never experienced a time, during which one ceased to seek the same thing as the other (Matth. 18, 20). But rather as being united in the Lord, they enjoyed his presence in holy fear. Saint Joachim, solicitous to obey the command of the angel, honored his spouse and lavished his attention upon her.

171. The Lord forestalled the holy Matron Anne with the blessings of his sweetness (Psalm 20, 4), communicating to her the most exalted graces and infused science, which prepared her for the happy destiny of becoming the mother of Her, who was to be the Mother of God himself. As the works of God are perfect and consummate, it was natural to expect, that He should make her a worthy mother of that most pure Creature, who should be superior in sanctity to all creatures and inferior only to God.

172. This fortunate couple passed twenty years of their married life without issue. In those times and among the people of the Jews this was held to be the greatest misfortune and disgrace. On this account they had to bear much reproach and insult from their neighbors and acquaintances, for all those that were childless, were considered as excluded from the benefits of the Messias. But the Most High wished to afflict them and dispose them for the grace which awaited them, in

order that in patience and submission they might tearfully sow the glorious Fruit, which they were afterwards to bring forth. They continued in most fervent prayers from the bottom of their hearts, mindful of the command from on high. They made an express vow to the Lord, that if He should give them issue, they would consecrate It to his service in the temple of Jerusalem.

173. This offer was made by an especial impulse of the Holy Ghost, who had ordained, that She who was to be the habitation of the Son of God, should, before coming into existence, be offered and, as it were, pledged by her parents to the same Lord. For if they had not obliged themselves by a special promise to offer Her to the temple before they possessed Her, they would not have been able to make the sacrifice on account of the vehement love, which her sweetness and grace engendered. According to our mode of understanding such things, the Lord in a measure allayed his fears, lest his most holy Mother should remain in possession of any one else, and his love so to say, diverted itself by a certain delay in creating Her.

174. Having, at the command of the Lord, persevered a whole year in fervent petitions, it happened by divine inspiration and ordainment, that Joachim was in the temple of Jerusalem offering prayers and sacrifices for the coming of the Messias, and for the fruit, which he desired. Arriving with others of his town to offer the common gifts and contributions in the presence of the high priest, Isachar, an inferior priest, harshly reprehended the old and venerable Joachim, for presuming to come with the other people to make his offerings in spite of his being childless. Among other things he said to him: "Why dost thou, Joachim, come with thy offerings and sacrifices, which are not pleasing in the eyes of

God, since thou art a useless man? Leave this company and depart; do not annoy God with thy offerings and sacrifices, which are not acceptable to Him." The holy man, full of shame and confusion, in humble love thus addressed the Lord: "Most high Lord and God, at thy command and desire I came to the temple; he that takes thy place, despises me; my sins merit this disgrace; but since I accept it according to thy will, do not cast away the creature of thy hands" (Ps. 137, 8). Joachim hastened away from the temple full of sorrow, though peaceful and contented, to a farm or storehouse, which he possessed, and there in solitude he called upon the Lord for some days, praying as follows:

175. "Most high and eternal God, on whom depends the whole existence and the reparation of the human race, prostrate in thy living presence, I supplicate thy infinite goodness to look upon the affliction of my soul and to hear my prayers and those of thy servant Anne. To thine eyes are manifest all our desires (Ps. 37, 10) and if I am not worthy to be heard, do not despise my humble spouse. Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, our first forefathers, do not hide thy kindness from us, nor permit, since Thou art a Father, that I be numbered among the reprobate and the outcasts in my offerings, because Thou givest me no issue. Remember, O Lord, the sacrifices (Deut. 9, 27) and oblations of thy servants and prophets, my ancestors, and look upon their works, which were pleasing to thy divine eyes. Since Thou commandest me, my Lord, to pray to Thee in confidence, grant me, according to the greatness of thy mercy and power, that which at thy wish I pray for. In beseeching Thee I fulfill thy will and render the obedience, in which Thou hast promised to grant my petition. If my sins hinder the exercise of thy mercies,

take away what displeases and hinders Thee. Thou art mighty, Lord God of Israel, and all that Thou wishest, Thou canst accomplish without hindrance. Let my prayer reach thy ears, and if I am poor and insignificant, Thou art infinite and always ready to exercise mercy with the downcast. Whither shall I flee from Thee, who art the King of kings and the Lord of lords? Thou hast filled thy sons and servants with benedictions in their generations and Thou hast instructed me to expect and desire from thy bounty what Thou hast wrought in my brethren. If it is Thy pleasure to yield to my petition, and grant me issue I will offer it and consecrate it to thy holy temple in perpetual service. I have riveted my eyes and my will on thy holy Will and have always desired to keep them free from the vanishing things of this world. Fulfill in regard to me, what is according to thy pleasure, and rejoice our spirit with the accomplishment of our hopes. Look down from thy throne upon this vile dust, and raise it up, in order that it may magnify Thee and adore Thee, and let in all things be fulfilled thy will, and not mine."

176. While Joachim was making these petitions in his retirement, the holy angel manifested to holy Anne, that her prayer for an issue, accompanied by such holy desires and intentions, was pleasing to the Almighty. Having thus recognized the will of God and of her husband Joachim, she prayed with humble subjection and confidence, that it be fulfilled. "Most high God, my Lord, Creator and Preserver of the universe, whom my soul reveres as the true God, infinite, holy and eternal! Prostrate in thy real presence I will speak, though I am but dust and ashes (Esther 13, 9) proclaiming my need and my affliction. Lord God uncreated, make us worthy of thy benediction, and give us holy fruit of the womb, in

order that we may offer it to thy service in the temple (Gen. 18, 27). Remember, O Lord, that Anne, thy servant, the mother of Samuel, was sterile and that by thy generous mercy she received the fulfillment of her desires. I feel within me a courage which incites and animates me to ask Thee to show me the same mercy. Hear then, O sweetest Lord and Master, my humble petition: remember the sacrifices, offerings and services of my ancestors and the favors, which thy almighty arm wrought in them. I wish to offer to Thee, O Lord, an oblation pleasing and acceptable in thy eyes: but the greatest in my power, is my soul, my faculties and inclinations given to Thee, and my whole being. If Thou look upon me from thy throne giving me issue, I will from this moment sanctify and offer it for thy service in the temple. Lord God of Israel, if it should be thy pleasure and good will to look upon this lowly and impoverished creature, and to console thy servant Joachim, grant me my prayer and may in all things be fulfilled thy holy and eternal will."

177. These were the prayers, which saint Joachim and Anne offered. On account of my great shortcoming and insufficiency I cannot fully describe what I was made to understand concerning the holiness of these prayers and of these saintly parents. It is impossible to tell all; nor is it necessary, since what I have said is sufficient for my purpose. In order to obtain a befitting idea of these saints, it is necessary to estimate and judge them in connection with the most high end and ministry, for which they were chosen by God; for they were the immediate grandparents of Christ our Lord, and parents of his most holy Mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL, AND HOW GOD PREPARED HOLY ANNE FOR IT BY A SPECIAL FAVOR.

178. The petitions of the holy Joachim and Anne reached the throne of the holy Trinity, where they were accepted and the will of God was made known to the holy angels. The three divine Persons, according to our way of expressing such things, spoke to them as follows: "We have in our condescension resolved, that the Person of the Word shall assume human flesh and that through Him all the race of mortals shall find a remedy. We have already manifested and promised this to our servants, the Prophets, in order that they might announce it to the world. The sins of the living, and their malice are so great, that We are much constrained by the rigor of justice. But our goodness and mercy is greater than all their evil-doing, nor can it extinguish our love toward men. We will look with mercy upon the works of our hands, which We have created according to our image and likeness, so as to enable them to become inheritors and participators of our eternal glory (I Pet. 3, 22). We will consider the services and the pleasure derived from our servants and friends and regard the multitude of those, who shall distinguish themselves in our praise and friendship. And above all have We before our eyes Her, who is to be the chosen One, who is to be acceptable above all creatures and singled

out for our delight and pleasure; because She is to conceive the person of the Word in her womb and clothe Him with human flesh. Since there must be a beginning of this work, by which We shall manifest to the world the treasures of the Divinity, this shall be the acceptable and opportune time for its execution. Joachim and Anne have found grace in our eyes; We look upon them with pleasure and shall enrich them with choicest gifts and graces. They have been faithful and constant in their trials and in simplicity and uprightness their souls have become acceptable and pleasing before Us. Let Gabriel as our ambassador bring tidings of joy for them and for the whole human race; let him announce to them, that in our condescension We have looked upon them and chosen them."

179. Thus the celestial spirits were instructed in regard to the will and the decree of the Almighty. The holy archangel Gabriel humbled himself before the throne of the most blessed Trinity, adoring and revering the divine Majesty in the manner which befits these most pure and spiritual substances. From the throne an intellectual voice proceeded, saying: "Gabriel, enlighten, vivify and console Joachim and Anne, our servants, and tell them, that their prayers have come to our presence and their petitions are heard in clemency. Promise them, that by the favor of our right hand they will receive the Fruit of benediction, and that Anne shall conceive a Daughter, to whom We give the name of MARY."

180. Together with this mandate of the Most High many mysteries and sacraments pertaining to this message were revealed to saint Gabriel. With it he descended from the vault of the empyrean heaven and appeared to holy Joachim, while he was in prayer, saying to him: "Just and upright man, the Almighty from his

sovereign throne has taken notice of thy desires and has heard thy sighs and prayers, and has made thee fortunate on earth. Thy spouse Anne shall conceive and bear a Daughter, who shall be blessed among women (Luc. 1, 42, 48). The nations shall know Her as the Blessed. He who is the eternal God, increate, and the Creator of all, most upright in his judgments, powerful and strong, sends me to thee, because thy works and alms have been acceptable. Love has softened the heart of the Almighty, and has hastened his mercies, and in his liberality He wishes to enrich thy house and thy family with a Daughter, whom Anne shall conceive; the Lord himself has chosen for Her the name of MARY. From her childhood let Her be consecrated to the temple, and in it to God, as thou hast promised. She shall be elect, exalted, powerful and full of the Holy Ghost; on account of the sterility of Anne her conception shall be miraculous; She shall be a Daughter wonderful in all her doings and in all her life. Praise the Lord, Joachim, for this benefit and magnify Him, for in no other nation has He wrought the like. Thou shalt go to give thanks in the temple of Jerusalem and in testimony of the truth of this joyful message, thou shalt meet, in the Golden Gate, thy sister Anne, who is coming to the temple for the same purpose. Remember that marvelous is this message, for the Conception of this Child shall rejoice heaven and earth."

181. All this happened to saint Joachim during his prolonged prayer and in a miraculous sleep, into which he fell for the purpose of receiving this message. He experienced something similar to that which happened to saint Joseph, the spouse of the most holy Mary, when it was made known to him, that her pregnancy was the work of the Holy Ghost (Matth. 1, 20). The most fortunate

saint Joachim awoke in great joy of soul and with solicitous and ingenuous prudence he concealed within his heart the sacrament of the King (Tob. 12, 7). With a lively faith and hope he poured forth his soul in the presence of the Most High, and full of tenderness and gratitude, he thanked and praised Him for his inscrutable judgments. In order to do this more appropriately he hastened to the temple as he had been ordered.

182. In the meanwhile the thrice blessed Anne was exalted in prayer and divine contemplation and totally wrapped up in the mystery of the Incarnation, which, after having been previously filled with a most high understanding and a specially infused light, she solicited from the eternal Word. With the profoundest humility and lively faith she was praying for the hastening of the coming of the Redeemer of the human race in the following words: "Most high King and Lord of all creation, I, a most vile and despicable creature, and yet the work of thy hands, desire at the price of the life which Thou hast given me, to urge Thee to hasten in thy mercy the time of our salvation. O may thy infinite kindness incline toward our need! O that our eyes might look upon the Restorer and the Redeemer of men! Remember, O Lord, the mercies of old shown to thy people, wherein Thou hast promised thy Onlybegotten, and may this promise of infinite kindness unbend Thee! May it come now, that day so much longed for! Is it possible, that the Most High should descend from his holy heaven? Is it possible, that He is to have a terrestrial Mother? What woman shall She be, that is so fortunate and blessed? O who shall be so favored as to look upon Her? Who shall be worthy to be the servant of her servants? Blessed the race, that shall be able to see Her and prostrate themselves at her feet to reverence

Her! How sweet shall be the sight of Her and her company! Blessed the eyes, that shall see Her and the ears, that shall listen to her words, and the family, from whom the Most High shall select his Mother! Execute, O Lord, this decree: fulfill thy divine benevolence!"

183. In this prayer and colloquy saint Anne occupied herself after having received enlightenment regarding this ineffable mystery. She weighed all the conferences, which she had had with her guardian angel, who on many occasions, and now more openly than ever before, had manifested himself to her. The Almighty ordained, that the message of the Conception of his holy Mother should in some way be similar to the one, by which the Incarnation was announced. For saint Anne was meditating in humble fervor upon her, who was to bear the Mother of the incarnate Word. And the most holy Virgin was making the same reflections upon Her, who was to be the Mother of God, as I will relate in its place (Part II, 117). It was also the same angel, that brought both messages, and in human form, though he showed himself in a more beautiful and mysterious shape to the Virgin Mary.

184. The holy archangel Gabriel appeared to saint Anne in human form more resplendent than the sun, and said to her: "Anne, servant of God, I am an angel sent from the council of the Most High, who in divine condescension looks upon the humble of the earth (Psalm 137, 6). Good is incessant prayer and humble confidence. The Lord has heard thy petitions, for He is nigh to those who call upon Him with living faith and hope, and who expect his salvation (Ps. 144, 18). If He delays hearing their clamors and defers the fulfillment of their prayers, it is in order to dispose them to receive and to oblige Himself to give much more than

they ask and desire. Prayer and almsgiving open the treasures of the Lord, the omnipotent King, and incline Him to be lavish in mercy toward those, who ask (Tob. 11, 8). Thou and Joachim have prayed for the Fruit of benediction and the Most High has resolved to give you holy and wonderful Fruit; and by it He will enrich you with heavenly gifts, granting to you much more than you have asked. For having humiliated yourselves in prayer, the Lord wishes to magnify Himself in conceding your petitions: because those, who in humble confidence pray to Him without belittling his infinite power, are most agreeable to the Lord. Persevere in prayer and ask without ceasing for the Redemption of the human race in order to constrain the Most High. Moses by unceasing prayer brought victory to the people (Exod. 17, 11); Esther by prayer obtained liberation from the death sentence (Esther 4, 11); Judith by the same means was filled with fortitude to execute a most arduous task for the salvation of Israel: She fulfilled it, though a weak and frail woman (Judith 9, 1). David came forth victorious in his combat with the giant, because he prayed, invoking the name of the Lord (I Kings 17, 45; III Kings 18, 36). Elias drew fire from heaven by his sacrifice and by his prayer opened and closed the heavens. The humility, faith and the alms of Joachim and of thyself have come before the throne of the Most High and now He sends me, his angel, in order to give thee news full of joy for thy heart: His Majesty wishes, that thou be most fortunate and blessed. He chooses thee to be the mother of Her who is to conceive and bring forth the Onlybegotten of the Father. Thou shalt bring forth a Daughter, who by divine disposition shall be called MARY. She shall be blessed among women and full of the Holy Ghost. She shall

be the cloud that shall drop the dew of heaven for the refreshment of mortals (III Kings 18, 44): and in Her shall be fulfilled the prophecies of thy ancestors. She shall be the portal of life and salvation for the sons of Adam. Know also that I have announced to Joachim, that he shall have a Daughter who shall be blessed and fortunate: but the full knowledge of the mystery is not given him by the Lord, for he does not know, that She is to be the Mother of the Messias. Therefore thou must guard this secret; and go now to the temple to give thanks to the Most High for having been so highly favored by his powerful right hand. In the Golden Gate thou shalt meet Joachim, where thou wilt confer with him about this tiding. Thou art the one, who art especially blessed of the Lord and whom He wishes to visit and enrich with more singular blessings. In solitude He will speak to thy heart and there give a beginning to the law of grace, since in thy womb He will give being to Her, who is to vest the Immortal with mortal flesh and human form. In this humanity, united with the Word, will be written, as with his own blood, the true law of Mercy."

185. In order that the humble heart of the holy Anne might not faint away with admiration and joy at these tidings of the holy angel, she was strengthened by the holy Spirit and thus she heard it and received it with magnanimity and incomparable joy. Immediately arising she hastened to the temple of Jerusalem, and there found saint Joachim, as the angel had foretold to them both. Together they gave thanks to the Almighty for this wonderful blessing and offered special gifts and sacrifices. They were enlightened anew by the grace of the holy Spirit, and, full of divine consolation, they returned to their home. Joyfully they conversed about the favors, which they had received from the Almighty, especially

concerning each one's message of the archangel Gabriel, whereby, on behalf of the Lord, they had been promised a Daughter who should be most blessed and fortunate. On this occasion they also told each other, how the same angel, before their espousal, had commanded each to accept the other, in order that together they might serve God according to his divine will. This secret they had kept from each other for twenty years, without communicating it, until the same angel had promised them the issue of such a Daughter. Anew they made the vow to offer Her to the temple and that each year on this day they would come to the temple to offer special gifts, spend the day in praise and thanksgiving, and give many alms. This vow they fulfilled to the end of their lives, spending this day in great praise and exaltation of the Most High.

186. The prudent matron Anne never disclosed the secret, that her Daughter was to be the Mother of the Messias, either to Joachim or to any other creature. Nor did that holy parent in the course of his life know any more than that She was to be a grand and mysterious woman. However, in the last moments of his life the Almighty made the secret known to him, as I will relate in its place (Infr. No. 666). Although great revelations have been made to me concerning the virtues and the holiness of the two parents of the Queen of heaven, I shall not dilate upon that which all the faithful must presuppose. I shall rather hasten to the main point.

187. After the first conception of the body which was to be that of the Mother of grace, and before creating her most holy soul, God granted a singular favor to saint Anne. She had an intellectual and most exalted vision or appearance of his Majesty, in which, having com-

municated to her great enlightenment and gifts of grace. He disposed her and forestalled her with the blessings of his sweetness (Ps. 20, 4). Entirely purifying her, He spiritualized the inferior part of her body and elevated her soul and spirit to such a degree, that thenceforward she never attended to any human affair, which could impede her union with God in all the affections of her mind and will, and she never lost sight of Him. At the same time He said to her: "Anne, my servant, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: my blessing and my eternal light is with thee. I have created man in order to raise him from the dust and to make him the inheritor of my glory and participator of my Divinity. I also showered my gifts upon him and placed him in a position and state of high perfection; but he listened to the serpent and lost all. Out of my goodness and in fulfillment of the promises made through my holy Prophets, I wish to forget his ingratitude and to repair the damage, by sending my Onlybegotten as their Redeemer. The heavens are closed, the ancient Patriarchs are detained, deprived of the sight of my face and of eternal life promised to them. The inclination of my bounteousness is as it were strained in not communicating itself to the human race. Now, at this time do I wish to show mercy, giving them the person of the eternal Word, to become man, to be born of a Woman, who shall be Mother and Virgin, immaculate, pure, blessed and holy above all creatures. Of Her, my chosen and only One, I make thee mother." (Cant. 6, 8).

188. I cannot easily explain the effect of these words in the upright heart of holy Anne, she being the first of those born of men, to whom was revealed the mystery of her most holy Daughter, who was to be the Mother of God and chosen for the greatest sacrament of the divine

Omnipotence. It was befitting that she should know of this mystery and properly estimate the Treasure which she was to possess and to which she was to give birth and existence. She heard with profound humility the voice of the Most High and with a submissive heart she answered: "Lord, God eternal, it is the essence of thy immense bounty and the work of thy powerful arm, to raise from the dust those that are poor and despised (Ps. 112, 7). I acknowledge myself, O Lord, a creature unworthy of such mercies and benefits. What shall this lowly worm do in thy presence? Thy own Being and thy own magnificence alone can I offer in thanksgiving, and my soul and all its faculties in sacrifice. Use me, O Lord, according to thy will, since to it I resign myself entirely. I wish to be as completely thy own as such a favor requires; but what shall I do, who am not worthy to be the slave of Her who is to be the Mother of the Onlybegotten and my Daughter? This I know, and shall confess always: that I am a poor creature; but at the feet of thy greatness I await the course of thy mercy, who art a kind Father and the all-powerful God. Make me, O Lord, worthy in thy eyes of the dignity Thou bestowest upon me."

189. During this vision saint Anne was wrapped in a marvelous ecstasy, in which she was favored with the highest understanding of the laws of nature, and of the written and the evangelical precepts. She was instructed as to how the divine nature in the eternal Word was to unite itself to our own; how his most holy humanity was to be elevated to the being of God, and she understood many other mysteries, which were to be fulfilled in the Incarnation of the divine Word. By these enlightenments and by other gifts of grace, the Almighty disposed her for the Conception and the creation of her most holy Daughter, the Mother of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE ALMIGHTY MADE KNOWN TO THE HOLY ANGELS THE OPPORTUNE DECREE FOR THE CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY; AND WHICH OF THEM HE SELECTED FOR HER CUSTODY.

190. In the tribunal of the divine will, as the inevitable source and universal cause of the whole creation, all things with their conditions and circumstances, are decreed and determined, so that nothing is forgotten and no created power can in the least impede the fulfillment of the decree. All the spheres and the inhabitants contained in them are dependent on this ineffable government that rules them and coöperates with the natural causes unfailingly and unerringly in all that must be done. God works in all and sustains all by his sole will; in Him lies the preservation of all things or their annihilation, for without Him they would return to the non-existence, from which they were drawn. But since He has created the universe for his glory and for the glory of the incarnate Word, therefore He has from the beginning opened the paths and prearranged the ways by which the same Word should lower Himself to assume human flesh and to live among men, and by which they might ascend toward God, know Him, fear Him, seek Him, serve Him, love Him, praise Him and enjoy Him eternally.

191. Admirable was his name in all the lands of the earth, and magnified in the plenitude and congregation of the saints, whom He ordained and constituted as a

people pleasing to Him and over whom He placed the incarnate Word as their Chief. When the world had arrived at the last and befitting stage according to the wishes of his divine Providence; and when the predetermined time had come for the creation of that marvelous woman, whose sign had appeared in the heavens clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12, 1), and who was to rejoice and enrich the earth, the most holy Trinity executed the decree of forming Her. I will now manifest what within the narrow limits of my reason and concept I have been able to comprehend.

192. I have already said above (No. 34) that for God there is no past or future, since He holds all things present to his divine and infinite mind and knows all by one simple act. But reducing this to our way of speaking and to our limited mode of understanding, we conceive that his Majesty remembered the decrees of the creation of a Mother befitting and worthy of the Incarnation of the Word, for the fulfillment of his decree is inevitable. As the opportune and pre-ordained time had arrived, the three divine Persons conferred with each other saying: "Now is the time to begin the work of our pleasure and to call into existence that pure Creature and that soul, which is to find grace in our eyes above all the rest. Let Us furnish Her with the richest gifts and let Us deposit in Her the great treasures of our grace. Since all others, whom We called into existence, have turned out ungrateful and rebellious to our wishes, frustrating our intention and impeding by their own fault our purpose, namely, that they conserve themselves in the happy state of their first parents, and since it is not proper, that our will should be entirely frustrated, let Us therefore create this being in entire sanctity and perfection, so that the disorder of the first sin shall have

no part in Her. Let Us create a soul according to our pleasure, a fruit of our attributes, a marvel of our infinite power, without touch or blemish of the sin of Adam. Let Us perfect a work which is the object of our Omnipotence and a pattern of the perfection intended for our children, and the finishing crown of creation. All have sinned in the free will and resolve of the first man (Rom. 5, 12); let Her be the sole creature in whom We restore and execute that which they in their aberration have lost. Let Her be a most special image and likeness of our Divinity and let Her be in our presence for all eternity the culmination of our good will and pleasure. In Her We deposit all the prerogatives and graces which in our first and conditional resolve We had destined for the angels and men, if they had remained in their first estate. What they have lost We renew in that Creature and We will add to these gifts many others. Thus our first decree shall not be frustrated, but it shall be fulfilled in a higher manner through this our chosen and only One (Cant. 6, 8). And since We assigned and prepared the most perfect and estimable of our gifts for the creatures who have lost them, We will divert the stream of our bounty to our Well-beloved. We will set Her apart from the ordinary law, by which the rest of the mortals are brought into existence, for in Her the seed of the serpent shall have no part. I will descend from heaven into her womb and in it vest Myself from her substance with human nature."

193. "It is befitting and due to the infinite goodness of our Divinity, that It be founded and enclosed in the most pure matter, untouched and unstained by fault. Nor is it proper that our equity and providence overlook what is most apt, perfect and holy, and choose that

which is inferior, since nothing can resist our will (Esther 13, 9). The Word, which is to become man, being the Redeemer and Teacher of men, must lay the foundation of the most perfect law of grace, and must teach through it, that the father and mother are to be obeyed and honored as the secondary causes of the natural existence of man. The law is first to be fulfilled by the divine Word by honoring Her as his chosen Mother, by exalting Her with a powerful arm, and lavishing upon Her the most admirable, most holy and most excellent of all graces and gifts. Among these shall be that most singular honor and blessing of not subjecting Her to our enemy, nor to his malice; and therefore She shall be free from the death of sin."

194. "On earth the Word shall have a Mother without a father, as in heaven He has a Father without a mother. And in order that there may be the proper correspondence, proportion and consonance in calling God his Father and this Woman his Mother, We desire that the highest correspondence and approach possible between a creature and its God be established. Therefore at no time shall the dragon boast of being superior to the Woman, whom God will obey as his true Mother. This dignity of being free from sin is due and corresponds to that of being Mother of the Word, and it is in itself even more estimable and useful. It is a greater good to be holy than to be only mother; but all sanctity and perfection is nevertheless due to the motherhood of God. The human flesh, from which He is to assume form, must be free from sin. Since He is to redeem in it the sinners, He must not be under the necessity of redeeming his own flesh, like that of sinners. Being united to the Divinity his humanity is to be the price of Redemption, wherefore it must before all be preserved from sin,

and We have already foreseen and accepted the merits of the Word in this very flesh and human nature. We wish that for all eternities the Word should be glorified through this tabernacle and habitation of the human nature."

195. "She is to be a daughter of the first man; but in the order of grace She is to be singularly free and exempt from fault; and in the order of nature She is to be most perfect, and to be formed according to a special providence. And since the incarnate Word is to be the Teacher of humility and holiness and for this end is to endure labors, confounding the vanity and deceitful fallacies of mortals by choosing for Himself sufferings as the treasure most estimable in our eyes, We wish that She, who is to be his Mother, experience the same labors and difficulties, that She be singularly distinguished in patience, admirable in sufferings, and that She, in union with the Onlybegotten, offer the acceptable sacrifices of sorrow to Us for her greater glory."

196. This was the decree which the three divine Persons made known to the holy angels, exalting the glory and honor of their high and inscrutable judgments. And since his Divinity is a mirror in which He at the same time manifests new mysteries to the blessed who yield obedience, this explanation revealed in a new light the admirable order and marvelous harmony of his works. All this follows from that which We have said in the preceding chapters (VII, VIII) concerning the works of the Almighty in the creation of the angels, telling them to reverence as their superiors the incarnate Word and his most holy Mother. Moreover, as the time for the formation of that great Queen had arrived, it was befitting that the Lord should not conceal the fact of his having disposed all this in weight and measure (Sap.

11, 21). Self-evidently, with human words and terms so limited as those at my disposal, the understanding given to me about these hidden mysteries will be obscured rather than explained; but within these limits I will tell what I can concerning their manifestation by the Almighty to the angels on this occasion.

197. "Now the time has arrived" added his Majesty, "which was resolved upon by our Providence for bringing to light the Creature most pleasing and acceptable to our eyes. That Creature, in whom the human nature is freed from its first sin, who is to crush the head of the dragon, who was typified by that singular sign, the Woman that appeared in the heavens in our presence, and who is to clothe the eternal Word with human flesh. The hour is at hand, so blessed for mortals, in which the treasures of our Divinity are to be opened and the gates of heaven to be unlocked. Let the rigor of our justice be softened by the chastisements, which We have until now executed upon the mortals; let the attribute of our mercy become manifest; let the creatures be enriched, and let the divine Word merit for them the treasures of grace and of eternal glory."

198. "Now let the human race receive the Repairer, the Teacher, the Brother and Friend, to be life for mortals, a medicine for the sick, a consoler for the sorrowful, a balsam for the wounded, a guide and companion for those in difficulties. Let now the prophecies of our servants and the promises made to them, that We would send a Savior to redeem them, be fulfilled. And in order that all may be executed according to our good pleasure, and that We may give a beginning to the mystery hidden since the constitution of the world, We select for the formation of our beloved Mary the womb of our servant Anne; in her be She conceived and in her let

that most blessed Soul be created. Although her generation and formation shall proceed according to the usual order of natural propagation, it shall be different in the order of grace, according to the ordainment of our Almighty power."

199. "You do already know how the ancient serpent, since he saw the sign of this marvelous Woman, attempts to circumvent all women, and how, from the first one created, he persecutes all those, whom he sees excelling in the perfection of their works and life, expecting to find among them the One, who is to crush his head (Gen. 3, 15). When he shall encounter this most pure and spotless Creature, he shall find Her so holy that he will exert all his powers to persecute Her in pursuance of the concept which he forms of Her. But the arrogance of this dragon shall be greater than his powers (Is. 16, 6); and it is our will that you have particular charge of this our holy City and tabernacle of the incarnate Word, protecting, guarding, assisting and defending Her against our enemies, and that you enlighten, strengthen and console Her with all due solicitude and reverence, as long as She shall be a wayfarer among the mortals."

200. At this proposal of the Most High all the holy angels, prostrate before the royal throne of the most holy Trinity, avowed their promptitude and eagerness to obey the divine mandate. Each one desired in holy emulation to be appointed, and offered himself for such a happy service; all of them gave to the Almighty praise and thanksgiving in new songs, because the hour had arrived for the fulfillment of that for which they had, with the most ardent desires, prayed through many ages. I perceived on this occasion that from the time of that great battle of saint Michael with the dragon and

his allies, in which they were hurled into everlasting darkness while the hosts of Michael remained victorious and confirmed in grace and glory, these holy spirits commenced immediately to pray for the fulfillment of the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word, of which they became cognizant at that time. And they persevered in these oft repeated prayers up to the hour in which God manifested to them the fulfillment of their desires and petitions.

201. On this account the celestial spirits at this new revelation conceived an additional joy and obtained new accidental glory, and they spoke to the Lord: "Most High and incomprehensible God and Lord, Thou art worthy of all reverence, praise and eternal glory; and we are thy creatures and made according to thy divine will. Send us, most powerful Lord, to execute thy most wonderful works and mysteries, in order that in all things thy most just pleasure may be fulfilled." In such terms of affection the heavenly princes acknowledged themselves as subjects; and if it had been possible, they desired to increase in purity and perfection in order to be more worthy guardians and servants of Mary.

202. Then the Most High chose and appointed those who were to be occupied in this exalted service (the guardianship of Mary) from each of the nine choirs of angels. He selected one hundred, being nine hundred in all. Moreover He assigned twelve others who should in a special manner assist Mary in corporeal and visible forms; and they were to bear the emblems or escutcheons of the Redemption. These are the twelve which are mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse as guarding the portals of the city; of them I will speak in the explanation of that chapter later on. Besides these the Lord assigned eighteen other angels, se-

lected from the highest ranks, who were to ascend and descend by that mystical stairs of Jacob with the message of the Queen to his Majesty and those of the Lord to Her. For, many times did She send them to the eternal Father in order to be governed in all her actions by the Holy Spirit. She did nothing except what pleased the Almighty, and his pleasures She sought even in most insignificant things. Whenever She was not instructed by a special enlightenment, She sent these holy angels to the Lord in order to represent her doubt and signify her desire to do what was most pleasing to the divine will, and in order to be informed of his pleasure, as we shall relate in the course of this history.

203. In addition to all these holy angels the Almighty assigned and appointed seventy seraphim, choosing them from the highest ranks and from those nearest to the Divinity, in order that they might communicate and converse with this Princess of heaven in the same way as they themselves have intercourse with each other, and as the higher communicate with the lower ones. This was a privilege conferred upon the Mother of God because She was to be a wayfarer on earth and in nature inferior, though in dignity and grace, superior to all the seraphim. When at one time the Lord withdrew and hid Himself from Her, as we shall see later on, these seventy seraphim enlightened Her and consoled Her; to them She poured out the longings of her most ardent love and her anxieties in regard to her hidden Treasure. That there were seventy of these spirits, had reference to the number of years of her life, which was seventy and not sixty, as I will explain in its place. Among this number are included the sixty strong ones, which in the Canticles are mentioned as guarding the chamber or couch of Solomon, their loins girded with swords against the terror of the night.

204. These mighty princes and captains were assigned as a guard of the Queen of heaven from among the highest orders of the angelic hierarchy; for these, in that ancient battle of the obedient spirits with the proud dragon, were as the armed champions of the Lord of all creation, encountering and overcoming Lucifer and all his apostates with the sword of their virtue and of the divine Word. Hence, because they distinguished themselves in that great battle and victory by their zeal for the honor of the Almighty, and had been valiant and skillful captains in the divine love, and as they so zealously defended the honor of their Captain and Lord and of his most holy Mother by the arms of divine grace given to them in view of the merits of the incarnate Word, therefore it is said, that they guard the couch of Solomon, that they form his guard, girded with the sword about the loins. For thus is indicated the human generation or humanity of Christ conceived in the virginal chamber of Mary of her most pure blood and substance.

205. The other ten seraphim, which complete the number of seventy, were likewise chosen from the more distinguished leaders of those who in their opposition to the dragon had manifested a greater reverence for the Divinity and humanity of the Word and for his most holy Mother; for all this was determined during that brief conflict of the holy angels. It was one of the principal distinctions merited by them at the time that they were to be selected as guardians of their Queen and Lady. Altogether a thousand angels were chosen from the Seraphim and the lower orders of angels, and thus that City of God was superabundantly fortified against the infernal hosts.

206. In order that this invincible warrior-troop might

be well appointed, saint Michael, the prince of the heavenly militia was placed at their head, and although not always in the company of the Queen, he was nevertheless often near Her and often showed himself to Her. The Almighty destined him as a special ambassador of Christ our Lord and to act in some of the mysteries as the defender of his most holy Mother. In a like manner the holy prince Gabriel was appointed to act as legate and minister of the eternal Father in the affairs of the Princess of heaven. Thus did the most holy Trinity provide for the custody and the defense of the Mother of God.

207. All the appointments of the angels were a grace of the Almighty; but I understood that He observed, according to a certain measure, the laws of distributive justice. In his equity and providence He took account of the manner in which the holy angels acted and felt in regard to the mysteries revealed to them in the beginning concerning his most holy Mother. For in accepting the divine decree each was moved by different affections and inclinations toward the sacraments which became known to them. Not in all was the same grace or willingness and affection. Some of them yielded with an especial devotion, when they recognized the union of the divine and the human natures in the person of the Word, which was to be enclosed in the limits of a human body and yet raised to the sovereignty of all creation. Others in their affection were moved to admire the love of the Onlybegotten of the Father, that caused Him to become mortal and offer Himself as a sacrifice for men. Others again signalized themselves in praising God for creating a body and soul of such excellence, that it would be superior to all the celestial spirits and that from it the Creator should take human flesh. Accord-

ing to these sentiments and in proportion to them, and as it were for accidental reward, these holy angels were selected to serve in the mysteries of Christ and his most holy Mother. In the same way those, who during this life have signalized themselves in the practice of certain virtues are rewarded with the special crowns of doctors, virgins and so forth.

208. In pursuance of this, when these holy princes appeared in visible shape to the Mother of God, they bore devices or badges representing the different mysteries, as I will relate farther on. Some of them showed the emblems of the Incarnation, others those of the Passion, others those of the Queen herself, and of her great dignity. But She did not immediately recognize these badges when they began to be shown to Her, for the Almighty had told all these holy angels not to make known to Her that She was to be the Mother of his Onlybegotten until the hour appointed by his divine wisdom; yet at the same time always to converse with Her about the sacraments and mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption, in order to excite her fervor and her prayers. Too tardy is human speech, and inadequate my brief terms and words, for the manifestation of these exalted lights and intelligences.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD THROUGH DIVINE POWER.

209. The divine wisdom had now prepared all things for drawing forth the spotless image of the Mother of grace from the corruption of nature. The number and congregation of ancient Patriarchs and Prophets had been completed and gathered, and the mountains had been raised, on which this mystical City of God was to be built (Ps. 86, 2). By the power of his right hand He had already selected incomparable treasures of the Divinity to enrich and endow Her. A thousand angels were equipped for her guard and custody, that they might serve as most faithful vassals of their Queen and Lady. He had provided a noble and kingly ancestry from whom She should descend and had selected for Her most holy and perfect parents, than whom none holier or more perfect could be found in the world. For there is no doubt that if better and more apt parents existed, the Almighty would have selected them for Her, who was to be chosen by God as his Mother.

210. He endowed these parents with abundant graces and blessings of his right hand, and enriched them with all virtues, with enlightenments of divine science and with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. After having announced to the two saints, Joachim and Anne, that He would grant them a Daughter, admirable and blessed among women, He permitted the work of the first Conception to take place, namely, that of the most

pure body of Mary. The age of Anne, when She married Joachim, was twenty-four, and that of Joachim, forty-six. Twenty years they lived in married life without having an issue, and thus Anne, at the same time of the Conception of her Daughter, was forty-four years old, and saint Joachim sixty-six. Although the conception happened according to the ordinary course of nature, yet the Most High freed it from imperfections and disorders, permitting only what was strictly required according to nature, in order that the proper material might be furnished for the formation of the most perfect substance within the limits of a mere creature.

211. God limited the natural activity in the two parents and by his grace prevented any fault or imperfection, substituting for them virtue and merit, and entire propriety in the manner of conception, which though natural and according to the common order, was nevertheless directed, supplemented and perfected by the action of divine grace, without disturbing the proper effect due to the law of nature. As regards the holy matron Anne, the divine power was more manifest on account of her natural sterility; in her the Conception was miraculous, not only in regard to the manner, but in regard to its very substance. In regard to the conceptions which happen entirely according to the natural order and in virtue of the natural powers, there is no necessity of recurring to or of depending on any supernatural cause. The parents in concurring are sufficient causes of the propagation, even in case they furnish the material and the concurrent acts of generation with imperfection and without proper measure.

212. But in this Conception, although the father was not naturally sterile, yet on account of his age and moderation, his natural powers were in a measure suppressed

and weakened; and therefore he was enlivened, restored and enabled to act on his part with entire perfection and with the plenitude of his faculties, proportionately to the sterility of the mother. In both of them nature and grace concurred; the former briefly, with measure, and in that which was necessary; the latter overflowingly, powerfully and generously; absorbing, yet not confounding nature, exalting it and perfecting it in a miraculous manner. Thus grace was the origin of this Conception, while it called into its service the activity of nature in so far as was necessary for the birth of that ineffable Daughter from her natural parents.

213. The mode of repairing the sterility of the most holy mother Anne did not consist in the restitution of that condition, which was wanting in her natural faculties of conception; for thus restored, she would have conceived in no way different from the rest of women; the Lord concurred with her sterile faculties in a more miraculous manner for the formation of the body from natural material. Thus the faculties and the material were of the natural order, but the manner of moving them happened by the miraculous power of the Divinity. As soon as the miracle of this Conception had ceased, the mother was left in her former sterility never to conceive again, since no new quality was taken from or added to the natural temperament. This wonder, it seems to me, can be made intelligible by that which our Savior wrought, when saint Peter walked over the water (Matth. 14, 29). In order to sustain him, the water was not necessarily changed into crystal or ice, over which he and others could have walked without requiring any miraculous intervention except that of thus suddenly changing it into ice; but without thus changing the water, the Lord gave it the power to sustain the body of

the Apostle. It remained in a liquid state both during and after the miracle; for when saint Peter ran over it, he began to sink and was about to drown. The miracle therefore was performed without changing the water by the addition of a new quality.

214. Much like to this, though much more wonderful, was the miracle of the Conception of Mary most holy in her mother Anne. The parents were so entirely governed by grace and withdrawn from concupiscence and delectation, that the accidental imperfections, which ordinarily are the material or the instruments of conception, and which induce original sin, were altogether wanting. Thus was furnished a material exempt from imperfection and furnished in such a manner that the act itself was meritorious. Hence in so far as this act was concerned it could easily be free from sin or imperfection, even if divine Providence had not previously arranged every particular of this event. This miracle the Almighty reserved solely for Her, who was to be a Mother worthy of Himself. For if it was proper that the material part of his being should have its origin according to the order maintained in the conception of the other children of Adam, it was likewise eminently proper that, without destroying nature, grace should concur in it with all its efficacy and power, and that it should excel in Her and act in Her more efficaciously than in all the children of Adam; yea, be greater than even in Adam and Eve, who gave origin to the corruption of nature and to its disorderly concupiscence.

215. In the formation of the body of the most holy Mary the wisdom and power of the Almighty proceeded so cautiously that the quantities and qualities of the four natural elements of the human body, the sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric, were compounded in

exact proportion and measure; in order that by this most perfect proportion in its mixture and composition it might assist the operations of that holy Soul with which it was to be endowed and animated. This wonderfully composed temperament was afterwards the source and the cause, which in its own way made possible the serenity and peace that reigned in the powers and faculties of the Queen of heaven during all her life. Never did any of these elements oppose or contradict nor seek to predominate over the others, but each one of them supplemented and served the others, continuing in this well-ordered fabric without corruption or decay. Never did the body of the most Holy Mary suffer from the taint of corruption, nor was there anything wanting or anything excessive found in it; but all the conditions and proportions of the different elements were continuously adjusted, without any want or excess in what was necessary for her perfect existence and without excess or default in dryness or moisture. Neither was there more warmth than was necessary for maintenance of life or digestion; nor more cold than was necessary for the right temperature and for the maintenance of the bodily humors.

216. Nor was this body on account of its admirable composition, less sensible to the influence of heat and cold and the other inclemencies of the weather, but rather, as it was more delicately and perfectly constituted, so it was more acutely affected by any extremes, not being able to furnish a defense against the excess of temperature in those parts, which were more subject to them. Certainly, on the one hand, these extremes would find in such a harmoniously constituted frame much less material in which they could work their changes; nevertheless, on the other hand, the delicacy of its composi-

tion made even ordinary influences much more penetrating than greater ones in other bodies. This admirable body, thus formed in the womb of holy Anne, was not capable of spiritual gifts before it was animated by the soul; but it was capable of receiving the natural ones. These were given to this body in supernatural degree and by supernatural power, so as to accord with the high purpose and the singular gifts for which it was formed; and in this it surpassed all others in the order of nature and grace Thus were given to it a complexion and faculties so excellent that all nature would never of itself be able to produce one similar to it.

217. Just as the hand of our Lord formed the first parents Adam and Eve in such a way as to befit original justice and the state of innocence and therefore also more excellently than their descendants (for the works coming directly from the Lord must be more perfect than those of secondary causes), so his Omnipotence, in a more excellent and superior manner, operated in the formation of the virginal body of the most holy Mary. And this He did with so much the greater solicitude and abundance of grace, as this Creature was to exceed in perfection not only the first parents, who were to sin so soon, but all the other creatures, corporal and spiritual. According to our way of speaking, God exerted more care in composing this little body of his most holy Mother, than in creating all the celestial orbs and the whole universe. In accordance with this rule are to be measured the gifts and privileges of this City of God from its first beginnings and foundations to its highest pinnacle next to the infinity of the Most High.

218. Such was also the measure of the distance between her miraculous Conception and sin and its cause, concupiscence; for not only was She, as the dawn of

grace, entirely free from sin, and always so exhibited and treated by the Lord; but also in her parents, sin and concupiscence was restrained and withheld in view of her Conception, in order that nature might not be disturbed or made imperfect in this work. For nature was to be subject to grace and served merely as an instrument to the supreme Artificer, who is superior to the laws of nature and of grace It was here that He commenced to destroy sin, and to lay the foundations, building up the castle of the strong armed One (Luc. 11, 22) who was to undermine evil and deprive it of the possessions which it tyrannically held.

219. The day on which the first Conception of the body of the most holy Mary happened, was a Sunday, corresponding to the day of the week on which the angels were created, whose exalted Queen and Lady She was to be. For the formation and growth of other human bodies, according to the natural order, many days are necessary in order to organize and fit them for the reception of the rational soul. Thus for a man-child are required forty and for females eighty days, more or less, according to the natural heat and disposition of the mothers. In the formation of the virginal body of Mary the Almighty accelerated the natural time and that, which according to the natural rule required eighty days, was accomplished in Her within seven days. Within these seven days, by accelerated growth, was organized and prepared in the womb of holy Anne that wonderful body which was to receive the most holy soul of her Daughter and of our Lady and Queen.

220. On the Saturday next following this first Conception, the Almighty wrought the second Conception by creating the soul of his Mother and infusing it into

the body; and thus entered into the world that pure Creature, more holy, perfect and agreeable to His eyes than all those He had created, or will create to the end of the world, or through the eternities. God maintained a mysterious correspondence in the execution of this work with that of creating all the rest of the world in seven days, as is related in the book of Genesis. Then no doubt He rested in truth, according to the figurative language of Scripture, since He has now created the most perfect Creature of all, giving through it a beginning to the work of the divine Word and to the Redemption of the human race. Thus was this day a paschal feast for God and also for all creatures.

221. On account of this Immaculate Conception of most holy Mary the holy Spirit has provided that Saturday be consecrated to the Virgin in the holy Church, since that was the day on which She received the greatest benefit through the creation of her soul and its union with its body without entailing sin or its effects. The day of the Immaculate Conception, which the Church now celebrates, is not the day of her first conception, when the body alone was conceived, but it is the day of her second Conception or the infusion of her soul. Body and soul, therefore, remained for nine months in the womb of holy Anne, which are the days that intervene between the Conception to the Nativity of that Queen. During the other seven days preceding the vivification of the inanimate body, it was disposed and organized by the divine power, in order that this work might correspond with the account that Moses gives of the Creation of all things, comprising the formation of the whole world at its beginning. At the instant of the creation and infusion of the soul in the most holy Mother, the

most blessed Trinity, repeated with greater affection of love the words, recorded by Moses at that time concerning man: "Let us make Mary to our image and likeness to be our true Daughter and Spouse and a Mother to the Onlybegotten of the Father."

222. By the force of this divine pronouncement and through the love with which it issued from the mouth of Almighty, was created and infused into the body of most holy Mary her most blessed Soul At the same time She was filled with grace and gifts above those of the highest seraphim of heaven, and there was not a single instant in which She was found wanting or deprived of the light, the friendship and love of the Creator, or in which She was touched by the stain or darkness of original sin. On the contrary She was possessed of the most perfect justice, superior to that of Adam and Eve in their first formation. To Her was also conceded the most perfect use of the light of reason, corresponding to the gifts of grace, which She had received Not for one instant was She to remain idle, but to engage in works most admirable and pleasing to her Maker. In the perception of this great mystery I confess myself overcome, so that my heart, unable to express itself in words, is dumbfounded in sentiments of admiration and of praise. I see the Ark of the Testament joined together, enriched and placed in the temple of a sterile mother with greater glory than the figurative one in the house of Obededon, and of David, or in the temple of Solomon (II Reg. 6, 11—III Reg. 8, 6). I see the altar of the Holy of holies (Is. 65, 17), whence is to be offered the first sacrifice that is to overcome and prove acceptable to God; I see the order of nature break from its laws to be rearranged; I see new laws established

against sin, disregarding those of the common order, overpowering those of guilt, conquering those of nature and supervening even those of grace itself; I see the formation of a new earth, and of a new heaven (Is. 65, 17) being the womb of a most humble woman, whither the eyes of the most holy Trinity are directed, where the Divinity presides, where the courtiers of the ancient heavens gather, and whither a thousand angels are delegated to form a guard over a tiny, animated body not larger than that of a little bee.

223. In this new creation is heard with a greater force the voice of its Maker, who, pleased with the work of his Omnipotence, says that it is very good (Gen. 1, 31). Let human frailty with humble piety approach this wonder, confessing the grandeur of the Creator, and let it rejoice at this new benefit conceded to all the human race in this its Reparatrix. Let the heat of disputation cease, overcome by thy divine light; for if the divine Bounty, as was shown to me, in the Conception of the most holy Mother, looked upon Her with such pleasure and upon original sin with such hostility that He gloried in the occasion and just cause of restraining and withholding its baneful currents, how can that appear proper to human wisdom, which was so abhorrent to God?

224. At the time of the infusion of the soul into the body of this heavenly Lady, the Almighty desired that her mother, the holy Anne, should feel and recognize the presence of the Divinity in a most exalted manner. She was filled with the Holy Ghost and was moved interiorly with a joy and devotion altogether above the ordinary. She was wrapped in exalted ecstasy, in which she was enlightened with deep intelligences of the most hidden mysteries and praised the Lord with new canti-

cles of Joy. These effects lasted during all the rest of her life; but they were greater during the nine months in which she bore in her womb the Treasure of heaven. For during that time these benefits were more constantly renewed and repeated with continual intelligences of the holy Scriptures and of their most profound sacraments. O most fortunate woman! let all the nations and generations of the world extol thee and call thee blessed!

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE HABITS OF VIRTUE, WITH WHICH GOD GIFTED THE SOUL OF THE MOST HOLY MARY, AND OF HER FIRST EXERCISES OF THESE VIRTUES IN THE WOMB OF HER MOTHER ANNE; SHE HERSELF GIVES ME INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMITATING HER.

225. The impetuous floods of the Divinity met in this holy City of the sanctified soul of Mary. It took its origin from the foundation of his Wisdom and Goodness, by which and whence He had resolved to deposit within this heavenly Lady the greatest graces and virtues ever to be given to any other creature for all eternity. And when the hour had arrived for giving them into her possession, namely the very moment of her coming into natural life, the Almighty fulfilled according to his pleasure and full satisfaction the desire, which He had held suspended from all eternity until the time for gratifying this wish should arrive. The most faithful Lord executed his design, showering down all his graces and gifts in the most holy soul of Mary at the time of her Conception in such an overpowering measure as no other saint, nor all of them combined, can ever reach, nor ever human tongue can manifest.

226. Although She was adorned as the Bride, descending from heaven, endowed with all perfections and with the whole range of infused virtues, it was not necessary that She should exercise all of them at once, it being sufficient that She exercise those, which were befitting her state in the womb of her mother. Among

the first thus exercised were the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, which relate immediately to God. These She at once practiced in the most exalted manner recognizing by a most sublime faith the Divinity with all its perfections and its infinite attributes, and the Trinity with its distinction of Persons. This knowledge by faith was not impeded by the higher knowledge which God gave her, as I will soon demonstrate. She exercised also the virtue of hope, seeing in God the object of her happiness and her ultimate end. Toward this her sanctified Soul at once hastened and aspired with the most intense desires of uniting Herself with God and without having for one moment turned to any other object or tarried one moment in her upward flight. At the same instant also She put into action the virtue of charity, seeing in God the infinite and highest Good, and conceiving such an intense appreciation of the Divinity, that not all the seraphim could ever reach such an eminent degree of fervor and virtue.

227. The other virtues which adorn and perfect the rational part of the creature, She possessed in a proportion corresponding to the theological virtues. The moral and natural virtues were hers in a miraculous and supernatural measure, and in a still more exalted manner was She possessed of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost in the order of grace. She had an infused knowledge and habit of all these virtues and of all the natural arts, so that She knew and was conversant with the whole natural and supernatural order of things, in accordance with the grandeur of God. Hence from her first instant in the womb of her mother, She was wiser, more prudent, more enlightened, and more capable of comprehending God and all his works, than all the crea-

tures have been or ever will be in eternity, excepting of course her most holy Son. And all this perfection consisted not only in the habits, which were infused in Her in such a high degree; but in the acts which She exercised in correspondence with the excellence of her state and in proportion to the activity of the divine power. Therefore her perfection was not circumscribed by any other bounds, nor was subject to any other limits than God's divine and most just pleasure.

228. Since much will be said in the course of this history, of all these virtues and graces and of their exercise, I mention here only a little of that which She achieved at the instant of her Conception by the help of the infused habits and the actual light bestowed upon Her. In the exercise of the theological virtues, as I have said, and of the virtue of religion, and of the cardinal virtues consequent upon it, She perceived God as He is and as the Creator and Glorifier; in heroic acts She reverenced Him, praised Him, gave Him thanks for having created Her, loved Him, feared Him and adored Him, offering sacrifices of worship, praise and glory because of his immutable Being. She recognized the gifts, which She had received, although some of them were yet hidden to Her, and She gave thanks with profound humility and prostrated Herself immediately in the womb of her mother, though yet in a body so small; and by these acts She merited more than all the saints in the highest state of perfection and sanctity.

229. In addition to the facts of faith She possessed other knowledge of the mystery of the Divinity and of the most holy Trinity. Although in this instant of her Conception She did not see Him intuitively as the saints, yet She saw Him in abstraction by a light and vision which though inferior to the beatific vision, were never-

theless superior to all the other ways, in which God can manifest Himself or does manifest Himself to the created intelligence; for there were shown to Her images of the Divinity so clear and manifest that She understood the immutable being of God, and in Him, all creation, with a greater light and clearness than any creature ever is understood by another. And these images were like a shining mirror from which was resplendent the whole Divinity and in It all creatures; so that in God She saw and recognized, by means of this light and by means of these images of the divine nature, all things with a greater distinctness and clearness than was possible by the images of the infused science already vouchsafed Her.

230. In all these different ways was laid open to Her from the very instant of her Conception the vision of all men and angels in their hierarchies, dignities and operations, and of all the irrational creatures with their natures and conditions. She saw the fall of the angels and their ruin; the justification and glory of the good ones, and the rejection and punishment of the bad ones; the first state of Adam and Eve in their innocence; their deception, their guilt, and the misery in which the first parents were thrown on account of it; and in what misfortune the whole human race was cast through them; the divine resolve to repair it; the pre-ordaining and the disposing of the world, the nature of the heavens, the stars and planets; the condition and the arrangement of the elements; She saw purgatory, limbo and hell; She saw how all these things and whatever is contained in them were created by the divine power and were maintained and preserved by the infinite goodness, without having need of any of them (II Mach. 14, 35). Above all She was informed of the most high sacraments con-

nected with the Incarnation, by which God was to become man in order to redeem the whole human race, while the fallen angels were left without a remedy.

231. In correspondence with this wonderful knowledge of her most holy soul at the instant of its union with the body, Mary exerted Herself by eliciting heroic acts of virtue, of incomparable admiration, praise, glorification, adoration, humility, love of God and sorrow for the sins committed against Him, whom She recognized as the Author and end of these admirable works. She hastened to offer Herself as an acceptable sacrifice to the Most High, beginning from that instant with fervent desire to bless Him, love Him and honor Him, because She perceived that the bad angels and men failed to know and love Him. She requested the holy angels whose Queen She already was, to help Her to glorify the Creator and Lord of all, and to pray also for Her.

232. The Lord in this instant showed Her also her guardian angels, whom she recognized and accepted with joyful submission, inviting them to sing canticles of praise to the Most High alternatively with Her. She announced to them beforehand that this was to be the service which they were to render Her during the whole time of her mortal life, in which they were to act as her assistants and guards. She was informed moreover of her whole genealogy, and the genealogy of all of the rest of the holy people chosen by God, the Patriarchs and Prophets, and how admirable his Majesty was in the gifts, graces and favors wrought in them. It is worthy of admiration, that, although the exterior faculties of her body at the creation of her most holy Soul were hardly large enough to be distinguished, nevertheless, in order that none of the miraculous excellence with which God could endow his Mother might be want-

ing, He ordained by the power of his right hand that in perceiving the fall of man She shed tears of sorrow in the womb of her mother at the gravity of the offense against the highest Good.

233. In this wonderful sorrow at the instant of her coming into existence, She began to seek a remedy for mankind and commenced the work of mediation, intercession and reparation. She offered to God the clamors of her ancestors and of the just of the earth, that his mercy might not delay the salvation of mortals, whom she even then looked upon as her brethren. Before She ever conversed with them She loved them with the most ardent charity and with the very beginning of her existence She assumed the office of Benefactress of men and exercised the divine and fraternal love enkindled in her heart. These petitions the Most High accepted with greater pleasure than the prayers of all the saints and angels and this pleasure of God was also made known to Her, who was created to be the Mother of God. She perceived the love of God and his desire to descend from heaven in order to redeem men, though She knew not how it should be consummated. It was befitting that God should feel Himself impelled to hasten his coming on account of the prayers and petitions of this Creature; since it was principally for the love of Her that He came, and since in Her body He was to assume human flesh, accomplish the most admirable of all his works, and fulfill the end of all other creatures.

234. She also prayed at the moment of her Conception for her natural parents, Joachim and Anne, whom She knew in God before She had seen them in the body. Immediately She exercised the virtues of love, reverence and gratitude of a daughter, acknowledging them as the secondary causes of her natural being. She made many

other petitions in general and for particular objects. By aid of the infused science given to Her, She began to compose songs of gratitude in her mind and heart for having, at the portal of life, found the precious drachm, which we all have lost in our first beginning (Luke 15, 9). She found the grace, which issued forth to meet her (Eccli. 15, 2), She found the Divinity, which met Her at the threshold of her existence (Sap. 6, 15). Her faculties of body and soul found, at the instant of her creation, the most noble Object, which attracted and entranced them; for they were created solely for It, and, as they were to be hers entirely, it was proper also that the first fruits of their activity, which were the knowledge and love of God, should be devoted to that Object. In this Queen there was no existence without knowledge of God, no knowledge without love, and no love without its merit. Nor was there in Her anything small, or measured merely by the common laws or by the general rules. Great was She altogether and great did She come forth from the hands of the Most High in order to proceed and arrive at such an excellence of being, that God alone would be greater. Oh how beautiful were those steps of thine, Daughter of the King, since with thy first one Thou didst reach the Godhead! (Cant. 7, 1). Twice beautiful wert Thou, for thy grace and beauty! (Cant. 4, 1). Heavenly are thine eyes (Cant. 7, 5), and thy thoughts are like the kingly carmine, since Thou hast enraptured his heart and hast made Him Prisoner by a thread of thy hair (Cant. 4, 9) and drawn Him captured by the love of thy virginal womb and heart.

235. There in truth the spouse of the King did sleep, while her heart was awake (Cant. 5, 2). There those bodily faculties, which scarcely had yet attained their natural form and had not yet seen the material light,

were asleep, and that heavenly heart, more marvelous on account of the greatness of its gifts than by the smallness of its size, was watching in the chamber of her mother's womb with the light of the Divinity, which bathed it and enkindled it in the fire of its immense love. It was not befitting that in this heavenly Creature the inferior faculties of the soul should act before the superior ones, nor that they should operate in an inferior, or merely in a manner equal to those of any other creature. For if the operations correspond to the essence of each creature, She, who always was superior to all of them in dignity and excellence, was also to be superior in her operations to all creatures, angelic and human. Not only was She to be nothing short of the angelic spirits in so far as they immediately made use of their faculties at the instant of their creation, but this prerogative was due to Her in superior excellence as She was created as their Queen and Lady. And this by so much more, as the name and office of Mother of God excels that of servants, and that of Queen, the estate of vassals; for to none of the angels had the Word said: thou shalt be my Mother (Heb. 1, 5); nor could any one of them say to Him: Thou art my Son. Mary alone could claim this commerce and relationship, which is therefore the real measure and foundation of the greatness of Mary, in the same way as the Apostle measured the greatness of Christ by his being the Son of the eternal Father.

236. In writing of these sacraments of the King, howsoever honorable it is to reveal his works, I confess my inaptitude and incapacity, being only a woman, and I am afflicted, because I am speaking in such common and vague terms, which fall entirely short of that, which I perceive in the light given to my soul for the under-

standing of these mysteries. In order to do justice to such sublimity, there were need of other words, more particular and especially adapted terms and expressions, which are beyond my ignorance. And even if they were at my service, they would be weighed down and made insipid by human weakness. Let therefore this human imbecility acknowledge itself unequal and incapable of fixing its eyes on this heavenly sun, with which the rays of the Divinity break upon the world, although yet beclouded in the maternal womb of holy Anne. If we seek permission to approach this wonderful sight, let us come near free and unshackled. Let us not allow ourselves to be detained, neither by our natural cowardice nor by a base fear and hesitation, even though it be under the cloak of humility. Let us all approach with the greatest devotion and piety, free from the spirit of contention (Rom. 13, 12); then we will be permitted to examine with our own eyes the fire of the Divinity burning in the bush without consuming it (Exodus 2, 2).

237. I have said that the most holy soul of Mary, at the moment of her purest Conception, saw the divine Essence abstractively, for it was not revealed to me, that She saw the essential Glory; rather I understood that this latter privilege was peculiar to the most holy soul of Christ, such being due and consequent upon the substantial union of the Divinity in the Person of the Word. For it was befitting that for not one moment should the soul of Christ be deprived in all its faculties of the highest grace and glory. Just as the man, Christ, our highest Good, commenced to be conjointly God and man, so He began at the same instant also to know and love God as one already possessing Him, that is as a comprehensor. But the soul of his most holy Mother was not united substantially with the Divinity and therefore

She did not begin her activity as a possessor of God, but entered into life as a wayfarer. However, She entered this state of wayfarer as one in closest proximity to the hypostatic union, and therefore She was endowed with a vision of God proportionate and most immediate to the beatific vision. Her vision was inferior to the beatific, but superior to all the visions and revelations which have been vouchsafed to other creatures, always excepting the clear vision and fruition of the Blessed. Nevertheless in some respects and in regard to some qualities, the perception of God by the Mother of Christ in her first instant, excelled even the intuitive vision of other creatures, in so far as She penetrated abstractively into greater mysteries than they. Moreover, though, She did not see God face to face at that moment of her Conception, She was favored with that kind of vision many times afterwards during the course of her life, as I will say later on.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME REGARDING THIS CHAPTER.

238. In the preceding chapters of this history I said a few times that the Queen and Mother of mercy had promised that when I should begin to describe the first operations of her faculties and virtues She would instruct me how to model my life after her own; for this would be the principal purpose of showing it to me as in a mirror. And this great Lady, most faithful to her promises, besides continuing to assist me by her heavenly presence and the explanation of these mysteries, began to acquit Herself of this promise in this chapter and told me to expect the same as long as I should continue to write this history. Accordingly at the end of each chapter I will write down what her Majesty shall teach me, as She has done even now, speaking to me in the following manner:

239. My daughter, I wish that thou reap for thyself the fruits which thou desirest from the description of the mysteries and sacraments of my holy life; and let the reward of thy labors be the greater purity and perfection of thy life, disposing thyself by the grace of the Most High to practice what thou hearest. It is the will of my divine Son, that thou exert all thy powers toward that which I shall teach thee, and that thou apply thyself with all thy heart to my virtues and works. Hear me with attentive faith, for I will speak to thee words of eternal life and teach thee the most holy things of a perfect Christian life and what is most acceptable to God. Begin even now to dispose thyself for the reception of the light, in which thou shalt see the hidden mysteries of my most holy life and the doctrine, which thou desirest. Continue in this exercise and write down that which I will teach thee in this regard. And now listen.

240. It is an act of justice due to the eternal God that the creature coming to the use of reason, direct its very first movement toward God. By knowing, it should begin to love Him, reverence Him and adore Him as its Creator and only true Lord. The parents are naturally bound to instruct their children from their infancy in this knowledge of God and to direct them with solicitous care, so that they may at once see their ultimate end and seek it in their first acts of the intellect and will. They should with great watchfulness withdraw them from the childishness and puerile trickishness to which depraved nature will incline them if left without direction. If the fathers and mothers would be solicitous to prevent these vanities and perverted habits of their children and would instruct them from their infancy in the knowledge of their God and Creator, then they would afterwards easily accustom them to know

and adore Him. My holy mother, who knew not of my wisdom and real condition, was most solicitously beforehand in this matter, for when She bore me in her womb, she adored in my name the Creator and offered worship and thanks for his having created me, beseeching Him to defend me and bring me forth to the light of day from the condition in which I then was. So also parents should pray with fervor to God, that the souls of their children, through his Providence, may obtain Baptism and be freed from the servitude of original sin.

241. And if the rational creature has not known and adored the Creator from the first dawn of reason, it should do this as soon as it obtains knowledge of the essential God by the light of faith. From that very moment the soul must exert itself never to lose Him from her sight, always fearing Him, loving Him, and reverencing Him. Thou, my daughter, owest this adoration to God from the beginning of thy life; but now I desire thee to practice it in a more perfect manner, as I shall show thee. Direct the eyes of thy soul toward the essence of God, which is without beginning and without limit, contemplate his infinite attributes and perfections. Consider that He alone is the true holiness, the highest good, the most noble object of creatures, that He alone gave being to all things and without having need of them, sustains and governs them. He is consummate beauty without defect, He is eternal in his love, true in his words and most faithful in his promises. He it was who gave his own life and subjected Himself to sufferings for the good of his creatures without waiting for any merits on their part. Over this wide field of goodness and of benefits extend thy vision and occupy thy faculties without forgetting or wandering away therefrom. For, having obtained such a great knowledge of

the highest Good, thine would be a loathsome meanness and disloyalty to forget Him, and horrible would be thy ingratitude, if, after having received an enlightenment so much above the common and ordinary, and divinely infused by faith, thou wouldst allow thy understanding and will to swerve from the course of divine love. If at any time in thy weakness it should nevertheless happen, then quickly seek it again with all dispatch and diligence and return more humbly to the Most High to give Him honor, glory and eternal praise. Remember that thou must consider it thy special duty to do this incessantly for thyself and for all the other creatures and in this I desire thee to exert all thy diligence.

242. In order to excite thyself to greater efforts, confer in thy heart what thou knowest of my own conduct; how at the first sight of the highest Good, my heart was wounded with love, giving myself entirely to Him in order never to separate myself thereafter. My whole life was consumed in this and I ceased not to press forward in order to arrive at the centre of my desires and affections; for since the Object is infinite, so love can have no rest or cessation until It is attained. With the knowledge of God and the love of Him should also go the knowledge of thyself, remembering and considering thy insignificance and vileness. Advert that when these truths are well understood, repeated, and meditated upon, they will cause divine effects in the soul.

Having heard these teachings and others of the Queen, I said to her Majesty:

243. "My Mistress, whose slave I am and to whom I dedicate and consecrate myself anew; not without cause has my heart desired and asked for this day, on which, according to thy maternal condescension, I might come to know thy heavenly doings and hear thy sweet

and salutary words. I confess, O Queen, from all my heart, that I can claim no goodness on my part, which deserves such a benefit as a reward and, if I were not obeying thy will and that of thy divine Son, I would look upon the attempt to write thy life as an unpardonable presumption. Accept, O my Lady, this sacrifice of praise from me and speak, that my servant may hear (I Reg. 3, 10). Let thy most delightful voice, O sweetest Lady, resound in my ears (Cant. 2, 14), for Thou hast the words of life (John 6, 69). Continue to teach me and enlighten me, O Lady, that my heart may dilate in the sea of thy perfections, furnishing me with worthy material for the praise of the Almighty. In my bosom burns the fire, enkindled by thy kindness and longing for that, which is most holy and most acceptable to thy eyes. In my inferior members, however, I feel the law of repugnance to the law of the spirit, retarding me and embarrassing me. I justly fear that it will hinder me from attaining the good which Thou, most loving Mother, dost offer to me. Look upon me, therefore, my Lady, as a daughter, teach me as thy disciple, correct me as thy servant, and compel me as thy slave, whenever I am tardy or disinclined; for, though unwillingly, I fall short through weakness. I will raise my aspirations to know the being of God, and, may his divine grace govern my affections, so that they may become enamored with his infinite perfections and if I attain Him, I will not dismiss Him (Eccli. 24, 24). But Thou, O Lady, Mother of knowledge and of beautiful love, beseech thy Son and my Lord, that He forsake me not in consideration of His liberality toward Thee, Thou Queen and Mistress of all creation."

CHAPTER XVII.

STILL TREATING OF THE MYSTERY OF THE CONCEPTION OF HOLY MARY AND EXPLAINING THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

244. The Immaculate Conception of the most holy Mary contains such great and such exalted sacraments that in order to make me more capable of understanding this admirable mystery, his Majesty opened up to me many of the hidden meanings of the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse of St. John and referred me to it for my guidance. In recording some of the things which were manifested to me I will divide this explanation into three parts, thus relieving the monotony which too long a chapter might entail. And first I will give the very words of that chapter which begins in the following manner:

245. 1. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth were gone, and the sea was now no more.

2. And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He shall dwell with them. And they shall be his people and God himself with them shall be their God.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor crying, nor mourning, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away.

5. And He that sat upon the throne said: Behold I make all things new. And He said to me: Write, for these things are most faithful and true.

6. And He said to me: It is done; I am the Alpha and the Omega; the beginning and the end. To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely.

7. He that shall overcome shall possess these things and I will be his God; and he shall be my Son.

8. But the fearful and the unbeliever and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

246. This is the first of the three parts of the literal rendering of this chapter and I will begin to explain it verse for verse. "I saw," says the Evangelist, "a new heaven and a new earth." He speaks of the creation of Mary by the hand of the Almighty and the formation of that material, from which the most holy human nature of the Word originated. With great propriety can that divinely human nature and the virginal womb, where and from which the Word was formed, be called a new heaven; for in that heaven, God began to dwell in a new way (Jerem. 31, 21), different from that in which He had dwelt before in the old heaven and in any of his creatures. But also the old heaven after the mystery of the Incarnation could be called new, for through it the novelty was made possible, that henceforth also mortal men could dwell therein. Moreover the renovation, which was wrought by the glory of the humanity of Christ and that of his most pure Mother, was so splendid, that in addition to its former essential glory, it renewed the heaven and added to it unheard of beauty and splendor. Although the good angels already dwelt there, that was a thing as of old and of yore; therefore it was as it were a new event, that the Onlybegotten of the Father should

by his death restore to men the glory lost through sin, and merit for them admittance into heaven, whence they had been expelled and incapacitated as inhabitants through their own fault. And because all this renewal of heaven had its beginning in most holy Mary, the Evangelist, in speaking of Mary born without sin, said that he saw a new heaven.

247. He saw also a new earth; for the old earth was stained and laden with the guilt of sin and the reprobation; but the holy and blessed earth of most holy Mary was a new earth without the fault or the malediction of Adam; and it was so new, that since the creation of the first earth none other was seen until the creation of most holy Mary. It was so new and free from the malediction of the old earth that in this blessed earth were renewed all the rest of the children of Adam. For on account of the blessed earth of Mary and through it, and in it, the earthly material of Adam was beginning to be blessed, renewed and vivified, having until then remained cursed and grown old in malediction. All was renewed in most holy Mary and in her innocence; and therefore the Evangelist, seeing that in Her this renovation of the human and earthly elements took its rise, says that in Mary conceived without sin he saw a new heaven and a new earth. He continues:

248. "For the first heaven and the first earth were gone." It naturally followed that as soon as the new earth and new heaven of Mary and her Son the God-man appeared in the world, the old heaven and the earth, grown old by the sin-tarnished human and earthly matter, should disappear. There was now a new heaven for the Divinity in that human being, which, being preserved from sin, could furnish a new habitation to God through the hypostatic union of the person of the Word.

Already the first heaven ceased to exist, that one which God had created in Adam and which had become deficient and unfit for the indwelling of a God. This disappeared and for it was substituted the other heaven in the coming of Mary. Then also arose the new heaven of glory for the human beings, not inasmuch as the empyrean heaven was removed, but in so far as from now on there would not be wanting the presence of men therein, who had been excluded for so many ages. In this respect it ceased to be the old heaven and it became a new one through the merits of Christ, now beginning to shine forth in the aurora of grace, most holy Mary, his Mother. Thus vanished the first heaven and the first earth, which until then was without hope of remedy. "And the sea was no more." For the sea of abominations and sin, which had flooded the world and destroyed the earth of our being, ceased to exist with the coming of most holy Mary and of Christ; for the sea of his blood superabounded, overwhelming the sea of sin in such an abundance, that no amount of guilt could prevail against it. If the mortals would only approach this infinite sea of the divine mercy and merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, all the sins of the world would cease to exist, since the Lamb of God came to undo them and take them away.

249. "And I, John, saw the holy city and the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." As all these mysteries had their beginning in most holy Mary, and were founded in Her, the Evangelist says, that he saw the holy city Jerusalem, for under this figure he speaks of Her. To Him was given to see Her, in order that he might value so much more highly and watch with befitting solicitude over the Treasure, which was con-

fided to his care at the foot of the Cross. And although nothing could ever fill up the void caused by the absence of her Son, yet it was befitting that saint John should be enlightened as to the dignity of the office, which he was to assume, namely, that of a substitute for her natural Son.

250. On account of the wonderful works, which God had accomplished in the city of Jerusalem, it was a most excellent symbol of Her, who was his Mother, the center and the focus of all wonders of the Almighty. For a similar reason it is also a figure of the works of the Church militant and triumphant; both were revealed to the eagle vision of saint John and he was shown the correspondence and similarity which those two mystical Jerusalems presented. But in an especial manner he viewed as from a watchtower the exalted Jerusalem of the most holy Mary, in which are portrayed and reproduced all the graces, wonders, gifts and excellences of the Church militant and triumphant. Whatever was transacted in Jerusalem, the city of Palestine, and all that it signified together with its inhabitants, is reproduced in the most pure Mary, the holy City of God, and with a greater and more marvelous excellence than in all the rest of heaven and earth and their inhabitants. Hence She is called the new Jerusalem, since all her gifts, her greatness and virtues are new and are the cause of new wonder to the saints. New also, because She came after all the ancient Fathers, Patriarchs and Prophets, and in Her were renewed and accomplished all their clamors, their prophecies and promises; new, because She came without the contagion of guilt and under a new dispensation far from the law of sin; new, because She entered into the world triumphant over sin, the devil and the first deceit, thus being the greatest new event since its beginning.

251. As all this was now on the earth and could not have proceeded from earthly causes, She is said to "come down from heaven." Although She was derived from Adam according to the ordinary course of nature, She did not tread the well-worn paths of sin in her coming, as had been done by all the preceding children of that first delinquent. For that Lady alone there was a special decree of divine predestination and a new path was opened, by which She should descend into this world with Her divine Son, neither being Herself the companion of any other of the mortals, nor any of them being found worthy of treading the same path as She and Christ our Lord. Thus She, as a new creature from the heaven of the divine mind, descended from the exalted spheres of divine forethought and pre-ordination. Just as the other children of Adam, derived from the earth, are earthly and tainted, so this Queen of all creation comes from heaven derived from God himself by innocence and grace; for ordinarily we say, that such a one is descended from this or that house or family, since he descends therefrom as from a source of his being. Now the natural substance of Mary, which She derived from Adam, scarcely comes into consideration, when we take into account her dignity as Mother of God with all that it imports as bringing Her so near to the eternal Father by grace and participation of the Divinity. This dignity causes her natural being to appear as merely accessory and of minor importance. Hence the Evangelist directed his gaze upon that which was in Her most exalted and heavenly, and not upon the insignificant part of her being that came from the earth.

252. He continues saying that She came "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." For the day of the espousal it is customary among mortals to procure

the most precious adornments and presents obtainable for adorning the terrestrial bride, and the most precious jewels will even be borrowed, in order that nothing may be wanting to the array befitting her state and condition. Therefore, if we admit, as we are indeed forced to admit, that the most pure Mary was the Spouse of the blessed Trinity, and Mother of the second Person, and that She was adorned and prepared for these dignities by the omnipotent God, who is infinite and rich without measure or limit: what adornments, what preparation, what jewels must those be with which He fitted Her out in order that She might be a worthy Spouse and Mother? Would He reserve any of his jewels in his treasury? Would He withhold any grace that could beautify and make Her precious? Would He permit Her to be deformed, ill-favored, blemished in any way or for the least instant? Would He be sparing and niggardly with his Mother and Spouse, when He so prodigiously lavishes the treasures of the Divinity upon other souls, who, in comparison, with Her, are less than servants and slaves of his house? Let all confess with the Lord Himself, that She alone is the chosen One (Cant. 6, 8) and the perfect One, whom the rest must recognize, proclaim and magnify as the immaculate and most happy among women, of whom in wonder and with joyful praise they ask: Who is She that comes forth like the morning, beautiful as the moon (Cant. 6, 9), and terrible as the serried armies? This is the most holy Mary, the only Spouse and Mother of the Almighty, who descends to the world adorned and prepared as the Bride of the blessed Trinity for her Spouse and her Son. This coming and entrance was made memorable by such great gifts of the Divinity, that the splendor of them made Her more agreeable than the sunrise, more

beautiful than the moon, more exquisite and admirable than the sun, and without equal among things created; She came more valiant and powerful than the heavenly hosts of saints and angels. She descended adorned and prepared by God, who gave Her all that He desired, and who desired to give Her all that He could, and who could give all that is not the essentially Divine, namely, all that is most approximate to the Divinity and farthest removed from any blemish of a creature. Entire and most perfect was this adornment, so that all defect was excluded, which would not have been the case, if in any regard She failed in grace and innocence. Without this the treasures of grace would not suffice to make Her so beautiful, since they would adorn but a distorted visage, a nature infected with sin, or a garment soiled and besmirched by guilt. Forever there would have been a stain, a shadow and blot of guilt, which no diligence on her part could obliterate. All this was unbefitting the Mother and Spouse of God, and if it was unbefitting Her, it was also unbefitting Himself; for He would have failed to adorn and prepare Her, with the love of a Spouse, or the solicitude of a Son, if, having in his possession most rich and precious vestments, He would have clothed his Mother and Spouse, and Himself, in soiled and worn-out garments.

253. It is verily time, that the honor due to our great Queen should be unveiled and made clear to human insight, and that whoever was misled by opposite opinions, should hesitate and cease to belittle and deny Her the adornments of her immaculate purity at the instant of her heavenly Conception. Compelled by the force of truth and by the light, in which I see these ineffable mysteries, I proclaim over and over again, that (as far as revealed to me), the privileges, graces, prerogatives,

favors and gifts of most holy Mary, not excluding even that of her being the Mother of God, all depend upon, have their origin, and are founded upon the fact, that She was immaculate and full of grace in the moment of her most pure Conception, hence all of them would appear ill-proportioned and deficient without this favor, like a sumptuous edifice without a solid and well-built foundation. All depend and are founded in a certain way upon the purity and innocence of her Conception and on this account it was necessary to refer so often in the course of this history to this mystery, especially when treating of the divine decree, the formation of most holy Mary, and the incarnation of her most holy Son. I will not enlarge on this; but I will give notice to all, that the Queen of heaven so esteems the beauty and adornment given to Her by her Son and Spouse in her purest Conception, that She will be correspondingly incensed against those, who, with evil intention and obstinacy, try to despoil Her and debase Her in this point, while her most holy Son had deigned to show Her to the world thus adorned and beautified for his glory and for the encouragement of the mortals. The Evangelist proceeds:

254. "And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he shall dwell with them. And they shall be his people and God himself with them shall be their God." The voice of the Most High is great and strong, sweet and efficacious to move and draw toward Him all creation. Such was the voice which saint John heard proceeding from the throne of the most blessed Trinity and which caused him to pay perfect attention, in order to understand thoroughly the mystery which was then shown to him. He was privileged to see the dwelling of God among men and that He lived among them, that He was

their God and they his people. All this was contained in the mysterious figure of most holy Mary descending from heaven in the form I have described. Since this divine tabernacle of God had now come to the earth, it followed, that God also dwelt among men for He lived and remained in this tabernacle. It is as if the Evangelist had said: the King has taken possession and is holding his court in the world and for no other reason than, that He might remain and dwell on earth. And in such manner, that from this tabernacle He was to assume the human form, in which He was to be a Dweller among men. In it He was to be their God and they his people, as the inheritance of the Father and also for his Mother. We were the inheritance of the Father to his Son, not only because in Him were all things created and because all was given to Him through the eternal generation: but also because He redeemed us as man clothed in our human nature, buying us as his people and as the inheritance of the Father and making us his brethren. For the same reason, namely, on account of his human nature, we are the legitimate inheritance of Mary most holy, since She gave Him the form of human flesh by which He purchased us for Himself. She, being the Mother and the Spouse of the Blessed Trinity, was also the Mistress of all creation, which She left as an inheritance of her Onlybegotten; for the human laws, are founded on right reason and therefore need not be invalid in the divine order of things.

255. This voice proceeded from the royal throne through an angel, who with a sort of holy envy seemed to me to say to the Evangelist: Behold and see the tabernacle of God among men, and He shall live with them and they shall be his people; He will be their Brother and He will assume human form in this tabernacle Mary, whom thou

seest descending from heaven, by her conception and formation. But we can answer with equal joy to these heavenly courtiers: indeed the tabernacle of God is with us, for it is our tabernacle, and in it God becomes our own; He will receive from it life and blood, which He offers in purchase for us in order to make us his people. He shall live in us as in his dwelling and habitation, since receiving Him in the holy Sacrament we are made his tabernacle (Joan 6, 57). Let those heavenly spirits be content to be our elder brothers, less in need than we. We are the frail little ones, who must be strengthened and regaled by our Father and Brother. Let Him come to the tabernacle of his Mother and to us; let Him assume human form in her virginal womb; let the Divinity be encompassed and live among us and in us. Let us hold Him in our midst, in order that He may be our God and we his people and his resting-place. Let the angelic spirits break forth in wonder and praise at such great marvels: but let us mortals enjoy Him, uniting with them in praise and love toward Him. The text continues:

256. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and death shall be no more, nor crying, nor mourning, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." In consequence of the Redemption, of which the Conception of most holy Mary has assured us, the tears, which sin has caused to flow from the eyes of the mortals, shall be dried. Those that avail themselves of the mercy of the Most High, of the blood and merits of his Son, of his mysteries and sacraments, of the treasures of his Church, of the intercession of his Mother, there is no more death, no sorrow, no tears: since the death of sin and all that resulted from sin is abolished and has ceased. The true

mourning is now left to the sons of perdition that dwell in the abyss whence there is no deliverance. The sorrows of labor are not a mourning, not a true sorrow, but only an apparent one, entirely compatible with the true and the highest kind of joy. For when accepted with submission, it is of inestimable value and the Son of God chose it as a loving pledge for Himself, his Mother, and his brethren.

257. Nor will there be heard any clamor, nor the voice of quarrel; for the just and the wise, following the example of their Master and of his most humble Mother, must learn to bear themselves with silence, like the artless lamb, when it is slaughtered as victim of the sacrifice (Is. 53, 7). They must renounce the right of our weak nature to vent itself in cries and to complain, seeing that his Majesty, their supreme Lord and model, was slaughtered on the frightful Cross in order to repair the damages wrought by our impatience and want of confidence (Phil. 2, 8). Why should our human nature be permitted to complain of labor and trouble, in view of such an example? Or how can hateful distinction and uncharitable sentiments be allowed among men, when Christ has come to establish the law of eternal charity? The Evangelist repeats: "and sorrow shall be no more," for if any sorrows remained among men, they are those of a bad conscience; but as a remedy of this kind of sorrow, there is the sweet medicine of the incarnation of the Word in the womb of the most holy Mary, so that now this sorrow is become acceptable and the cause of rejoicing, not any more meriting the name of sorrow and containing within itself the highest and the sincerest joy. With its introduction the first things have passed away, namely, the sorrows and the useless hardships of the ancient laws, which are now

sweetened and assuaged by the abundance of grace in the new law. Therefore he adds: "And behold, I make all things new." This voice proceeded from the One, who is seated on the throne, because He declares Himself as the Artificer of all the mysteries of the new law of the Gospel. Since all this newness was to begin with such an unheard of and such an inconceivable event, as the Incarnation of the Onlybegotten of the Father and the preservation of the virginity of his Mother, it was necessary, that, just as in all things, so in this Mother, there should be nothing old and worn-out. But original sin clearly is as old as visible nature, and if the Mother of the incarnate Word was to be infected with it, He would not have made all things new.

258. And He said to me: "Write, for these things are most faithful and true." And He said to me: "I am the Alpha and the Omega: the beginning and the end." According to our way of speaking, God was deeply grieved, because the great works of love performed for us in the Incarnation and Redemption should be so much forgotten; and as a remembrance of these great benefits and as a satisfaction for our ingratitude He commands them to be written. Therefore men should write them in their hearts and should begin to dread the offense, which they commit against God by their gross and execrable forgetfulness. Although it is true, that the Catholics believe and trust in these mysteries, yet by the contempt, which they show in their want of esteem for them and in their forgetfulness, they seem tacitly to repudiate them, living as if they did not believe them. Protesting against their foul ingratitude, the Lord says: "For these things are most faithful and true." Let the torpid and listless mortals in their sloth and listlessness understand, that these words are most

faithful as well as most powerful to stir the human heart from its torpidity, as soon as they become fixed in the memory, pondered and revolved in the mind as the most certain truth. For God has made them true for each one of us.

259. But as God does not repent of his gifts (Rom. 11, 29) and does not retract the good which He confers, even if man makes himself unworthy, He says: "It is done;" as if He wanted to say to us, that although by our ingratitude we have offended Him, He will not turn back from his course of love, but having already sent into the world the most holy Mary free from original sin, all that pertains to the Incarnation is already an accomplished fact. Since the most pure Mary was now on earth it appeared impossible, that the divine Word should remain in heaven and not come to earth in order to assume human flesh in the womb of the Virgin. And He assured us again saying: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last letter, the beginning and the end, including the perfection of all things; for if I give them a beginning, it is for the purpose of raising them to the perfection of their ultimate end. This I will do through Christ and Mary, commencing and perfecting in Them all the works of grace. In man I will raise and draw all creatures toward Me, as to their last end and their center, where they shall find repose.

260. "To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely. He that shall overcome shall possess these things." Who among creatures shall presume to give counsel to God (Rom. 11, 34) or who shall give so much to Him as to oblige Him to make a return? So says the Apostle, wishing to make it understood, that all that God does or has done for men, was of his free grace, and not through obligation toward

any one. The source of a fountain owes nothing to him that drinks from its stream; freely and gratuitously it flows for all that approach; and that all do not partake of its blessings is not the fault of the fountain, but of those that do not approach, for it invites all to partake of its joyful abundance. And if they do not seek it, it issues itself to seek such as will partake, flowing on without ceasing, in order that freely and without reward it might offer itself to all. O most reprehensible dullness of mortals! O most abominable ingratitude! If the true Lord is in no way obliged to us, and if He has given and gives all out of liberality, and if He has even exceeded all his graces and benefits by becoming man and dying for us, thus giving Himself to us entirely and letting flow the stream of his Divinity until it meets our human nature and unites Itself with us, how is it possible, that we, being so desirous of honor, glory and delight, do not hasten to drink from this freely flowing fountain (Is. 55, 1)? But well I see the cause. We do not thirst for the true glory, honor and happiness, but we seek only for the apparent and deceitful ones, despising the fountains of grace, which Jesus Christ has opened for us by the merits of his Death (Is. 12, 3). But to those that have thirst after the Divinity and its graces, the Lord promises, that He will give freely of the fountain of life (Jer. 2, 13). O what a great sorrow and pity it is, that having discovered the fountain of life, so few are thirsting for it, and that there are so many, who run after the waters of death! Those that conquer the demon, the world, and their own flesh within themselves, will certainly possess these things. And it is moreover said, that He offers them, for it might be doubtful, lest the waters of grace might at some time be denied or withdrawn: therefore in order to assure

us, they are offered freely for our possession without limit or restriction.

261. Over and above, the Lord hastens to certify all this by another assurance, saying: "I shall be his God and he shall be my son" (Apoc. 21, 7), and if He is to us a God, and we are to Him as sons, it is clear, that we are made to be sons of God, and being sons, also heirs of all his goods (Rom. 8, 17) and being heirs (although all our heirship is that of grace) we are made secure of our inheritance, just as children are secure in the inheritance of the possession of their parents. As He is Father and God at the same time, infinite in his attributes and perfections, who can estimate the goods, which He offers to us in making us sons? Therein is included the paternal love, our preservation, our vocation, our enlivenment and justification, all the means thereto, and finally our glorification and the state of happiness, which neither eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor ever has entered into the heart of man. All this is destined for those that conquer and have shown themselves true and courageous children.

262. "But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." On this formidable roster innumerable sons of perdition have written their names of their own accord, since infinite is the number of the foolish, who blindly have chosen death, blocking up for themselves the path of life. For this path is not hidden to those who use their eyes, but only to those who wilfully close their eyes and who have allowed and are allowing themselves to be fascinated and deceived by the fraudulent tricks of satan. According to the different

inclinations and tastes he proffers them the poisonous cup of vice, after which they seek. "The fearful" are those, who continually hesitate, and thus fail to taste of the manna of virtue and never enter into the pathway of eternal life; to whom virtue appears insipid and burdensome, though the yoke of the Lord is sweet and his burden is light (Matth. 11, 30); deceived by this fear they are overcome by their cowardice rather than by the difficulties. Those other ones, "the unbelievers," neither admit that truths are revealed, nor give belief to them, like the heretics, pagans and infidels; or if they do believe them, like the Catholics, it seems as if they heard them from afar and only through the faith of others, not giving full assent to the evident truth contained therein. Thus they hold but a lifeless belief and they live like unbelievers.

263. "The abominable," are those who follow vice without distinction, without repentance or limit, and rather boast of their wickedness and contempt, making themselves hateful to God and drawing down his wrath and curse. Thus they arrive at a state of rebellion and become incapable of good works. They draw away from the path of eternal life, as if they were not created for it, they separate and become estranged from God and his benefits and blessings, objects of disgust to God and his saints. Likewise are mentioned "the murderers," who, without fear or reverence for the divine justice, usurp the right of the supreme Lord, the sole Governor of the universe, and presume to chastise and avenge injury; these deserve to be treated and judged according to the same measure, which they use in treating and judging others (Luke 6, 38). "The adulterers" are excluded from that kingdom, since, for a short and impure pleasure, which is abhorred as soon as it is attained, and yet

in its disorder is never satiated, they despise the friendship of God and the eternal joys, which on being tasted are the more sought and are an unfailing fountain of undiminished delight. The "sorcerers" likewise, who believe and testify to the false promises of the dragon, hidden under the cloak of friendship; they are deceived themselves and so perverted that they deceive and pervert others. "The idolaters" cannot enter heaven for they seek after and feel the presence of the Divinity and do not find it, though He is in all our surroundings (Act 17, 27). They ascribe Divinity to the works of their own hands, which are only inanimate shadows of the truth and empty cisterns, totally inapt to suggest an idea of the grandeur of the true God (Jer. 2, 13). "The liars" also, who standing in opposition to the highest truth, which is God, are deprived of his rectitude and virtue, occupying the opposite extreme, confiding more in fraudulent deceits than in the Author of truth and of all good.

264. Of all these the Evangelist says he heard the sentence, "Their portion shall be in the pool of the fire burning with sulphur, which is the second death." Nobody can complain of divine justice and equity since He has justified his cause by the greatness of his benefits and numberless mercies. He descended from heaven to live and die among men and rescue them by his own life-blood. He opened up vast foundations of grace, which are freely offered to us in the holy Church. In addition to all this He gave us his Mother and the fountain of her most holy life, through which we may attain it. Therefore, mortals cannot excuse themselves, if in spite of all these gifts, they have not made use of his grace, and if they have abandoned the inheritance of eternal life in the pursuit of momentary delights of their

mortal life. No wonder that they harvest that which they have sown, and that their portion shall be in the terrible abyss of burning brimstone from whence there is no redemption nor hope of life, when once the second death of punishment has overtaken them. Although this second death is infinite in its duration, yet more wicked and abominable was the first death of their sin, into which they voluntarily precipitated themselves. For the death of grace caused by sin is opposed to the infinite sanctity and goodness of God; it offends Him, who is to be reverenced and adored. The death of infernal pains is the just punishment of these damnable souls and is the equitable retribution of his most unerring justice. Thereby this justice is exalted and proclaimed in the same measure in which it was outraged and despised by sin. Let it through all the ages be feared and adored. Amen.


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CHAPTER XVIII.

SEQUEL OF THE MYSTERY OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY AS DESCRIBED IN THE SECOND PART OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

265. The further wording of the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse is as follows:

9. "And there came one of the seven angels, who had the vials full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying: Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

10. And he took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain, and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

11. Having the glory of God; and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper-stone, even as crystal.

12. And it had a great wall and high, having twelve gates; and in the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

13. On the east, three gates; and on the north, three gates; and on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates.

14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them, the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15. And he that spoke with me had a measure of reed, of gold, to measure the city and the gates thereof, and the wall;

16. And the city lieth in a four-square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth; and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs; and the length and the height and the breadth thereof are equal.

17. And he measured the wall thereof a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel.

18. And the buildings of the wall thereof was of jasper-stone; but the city itself pure gold, like to pure glass."

266. The angels of which the Evangelist speaks in this place, are seven of those who attend in a special manner at the throne of God and who have received commission and power to punish some of the sins of men. This vengeance of the wrath of the Omnipotent (Apoc. 15, 1) will happen in the last ages of the world; but it shall be a new punishment, greater than which neither before nor after is possible during mortal existence. But since these mysteries are deeply hidden and since not all have been revealed to me, nor concern this history, I do not consider it proper to expatiate upon them, but I will pass on to what more closely concerns my task. This angel, of which St. John speaks, is the one through whom God will avenge with an especial and dreadful chastisement the injuries committed against his most holy Mother; for the insane daring, with which they have despised Her, has roused the indignation of his Omnipotence. As the most holy Trinity has pledged Itself to honor and exalt this Queen of heaven above all human creatures and above the angels, placing Her in this world as a Mirror of the Divinity and as the special Mediatrix of mortals, God has taken it in a particular manner upon Himself to avenge the heresies, errors,

outrages, and all injuries committed against Her, since thereby men have not glorified, acknowledged and adored Him in this tabernacle and have not made use of this incomparable mercy. These punishments are prophesied to the holy Church. Although the mysterious words of the Apocalypse enshroud in obscurity the rigor of this punishment, yet woe to the unhappy ones, that shall be overtaken by it! Woe to me, who have offended a God so strong and powerful to chastise! I am overwhelmed in the expectation of the great calamity here threatened.

267. The angel spoke to the Evangelist saying: "Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb," etc. The angel declares in this passage, that the holy city of Jerusalem, which he showed to him, is the espoused wife of the Lamb, referring by this metaphor (as I have already said No. 248) to the most holy Mary, whom St. John saw both as a Mother, or Woman, and as a Spouse of the Lamb, that is Christ. The Queen held and fulfilled in divine manner both offices. She was the Spouse of the Divinity, the only One (Cant. 6, 8) and incomparable on account of the unequalled faith and love, with which the espousals were entered into and accomplished; and She was the Mother of the same Lord incarnate, giving Him his mortal substance and flesh, nourishing and sustaining Him in his existence as man, which He derived from Her. In order to see and understand such high mysteries the Evangelist was exalted in spirit to a great height of sanctity and light; for without going out of himself and being raised above human weakness, he could not understand them; just as we, imperfect, earthly and abject creatures, cannot encompass them for the same reason. Then elevated thus high, he says: "He showed me the holy city of Jerusalem,

coming down out of heaven," for Mary was built up and formed, not on earth, where She was like a pilgrim and a stranger, but in heaven, where the common, earthly material was excluded. For though the material of her being was taken from the earth, it was at the same time so elevated in heavenly perfection as to be fit for the building up of that mystical City in a celestial and angelic, yea divine manner, effulgent with the Divinity.

268. Therefore he adds: "Having the glory of God," for the most holy soul of Mary was favored with such a participation of the Divinity and of its attributes and perfections, that if it were possible to see Her in her own essence, She would appear as if illumined with the eternal splendor of God himself. Great and (Ps. 86, 3) glorious things are said in the Catholic church of this City of God, and of the splendor, which She has received from that same Lord; but all of it is insignificant, and all human words fall short of the truth. The created intellect, entirely overcome, can but assert, that the most holy Mary partakes of the Divinity more than can be comprehended; confessing thereby the substance of the reality as well as the incapability of the mind to express in a proper manner, that which it wishes to confess. She is formed in the heavens, and only the Artificer who formed Her, is able to comprehend her greatness, He alone can estimate her origin and the affinity, which He contracted with most holy Mary, by perfecting her gifts to a semblance of the attributes of his infinite greatness and Divinity.

269. "And the light thereof was like to a precious stone, the jasper-stone, even as crystal," etc. It is not so difficult to understand how She can be similar at the same time to two such dissimilar stones as crystal and

jasper, as it is to understand how She can be similar to God. But from this comparison we derive a certain understanding of similarity to God. The jasper sparkles and glitters in colors of many different shades, while the crystal is characterized by limpid and uniform transparency; both combined form a rare and beautiful variety. The most pure Mary, in her formation, was endowed with the variety of virtues and perfections, which the hand of God itself selected and interwove in her soul. These graces and perfections made her soul like unto a most pure crystal, without blemish or stain of guilt; in her purity and transparency it scattered the enrapturing rays of the Divinity, just as the crystal meeting the sun, seems to absorb and again send forth its rays as if it were itself the sun. Nevertheless this crystal-jasper sparkles also in many-colored hues because She is a Daughter of Adam and a mere creature, and all the splendors of the Divinity contained within Her are only a participation. Although it appears to be a divine light, it is not a part of her nature, but communicated and conferred by grace. She is truly a creature formed and shaped by the hand of God himself, but in a manner befitting one who was to be his Mother.

270. "And it had a great wall and high, having twelve gates." The mysteries enclosed in the walls and portals of this mystical City, most holy Mary, are so hidden and great that I, an ignorant and obscure woman, can with difficulty reduce to words that which was shown to me. However, in order to proceed: At the first moment of the Conception of the most holy Mary, when the Divinity manifested Itself to Her in the vision above referred to (No. 228-236), the whole blessed Trinity, as if renewing the ancient decrees of her creation and exaltation, made a kind of agreement or contract with

this Lady, without however making it fully known to Her. It was as if the three Divine Persons conferred among Themselves and spoke to each other in the following manner:

271. "It is befitting to the dignity of our Bride and the Mother of the Word, that She be constituted the Queen and Mistress of all creation. Besides the gifts and riches of the Divinity, which We give and confer upon Her for her own sake, it is meet that She exercise the right of distributing the treasures of our mercy, so that She may communicate according to her pleasure the graces and favors necessary to mortals, especially to those who invoke Her as her children and clients, thus enriching the needy, freeing the sinners, elevating the just and affording a universal refuge to all men. And in order that all creatures may recognize Her as their Queen and Mistress, and as the Treasurer of our infinite bounties, from whence they are to be distributed, We entrust Her with the keys of our will and heart; She shall be in all things the Executrix of our pleasure toward the creatures. Above all We shall give to Her dominion and power over the dragon, our enemy, and over all his allied demons. Let them fear her presence and her name and in it, let their deceits be crushed and annihilated. Let all the mortals that fly to this City of refuge, find in it a sure and certain protection, free from all the dread of the demons and their snares."

272. Without revealing to the soul of the most holy Mary all that is contained in this decree or proposal, the Lord directed Her in that first instant to pray with great love, to intercede for all the souls, and to solicit and procure for them eternal life, especially for those, who in the course of their lives should commend themselves to her care. The blessed Trinity made known to Her that

before his most just tribunal nothing would ever be denied to Her; that She should command the devil and that She should have power, by virtue of her commands, to keep him away from souls, since She would have at her disposal the arm of the Almighty. But the reason of this favor was not made known to Her, nor the reason for all her other gifts, and this reason was no other than that She was to be the Mother of the Word. In saying that this City was surrounded by a great and high wall St. John refers to this godgiven prerogative of his Mother, that She was to be the secret refuge, protection and defense of all men, wherein they would find all the security of a city of refuge and of a strong fortress against their enemies. To this powerful Queen and Lady of all creation and to this dispensatrix of all the treasures of heavenly grace, all the sons of Adam were to fly. He says that the walls are very high, for the power of the most pure Mary to overcome the demon and to raise the souls to grace is so great that it is inferior only to that of God himself. So well armed for all this and so well defended and secure for Herself and for all those, who seek her protection, is this City, that not all the forces created by God outside of Her can overthrow or surmount its walls.

273. "Having twelve gates," for the entrance into this holy City is free to all nations and generations excluding none, but inviting all; so that no one shall be deprived of the mediation of this Queen of mercy for obtaining the gifts and graces, nor the eternal glory of the Most High. In the gates were twelve angels. These twelve princes are those mentioned above as being among the ones selected as the guardians of the Mother of the incarnate Word. The service of these twelve angels, besides attending to their Queen, was to assist especially and to

defend those souls who devoutly call on Mary, our Queen, for help, and who distinguish themselves in their devotion, veneration and love for Her. Therefore the Evangelist says that he saw them in the gates of that City; they are the ministers and as it were, the servants, who are to help, encourage and accompany the mortals in entering into the portals of piety, opened by the most holy Mary to eternal happiness. Many times does She send them with inspirations and favors in order to snatch those from the dangers of body and soul, who invoke Her and are her devout servants.

274. He continues: "And names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel;" for the angels receive their names according to the ministry and service, for which they are sent to the earth. And because these twelve princes are especially attached to the service of the Queen of heaven in order that they may assist in the salvation of men, and because all the elect are included with the twelve tribes of Israel, forming the holy people of God: therefore the Evangelist says that the angels bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. To each one of the twelve tribes one of these angels is assigned. Under their charge and protection are all those that from every nation and generation enter through the portals of the intercession of most holy Mary into the celestial Jerusalem.

275. Wondering at this exaltation of the most pure Mary and that She should be the Mediatrix and the portal of all the predestined, I was given to understand that this prerogative befits Her, who as Mother of Christ was to do such great things for men conjointly with her most holy Son. For She furnished Him from her own purest blood and substance with a body, in which He suffered and redeemed men. On account of her close

connection with his flesh and blood, She in a manner died and suffered in Christ, freely of her own will accompanying Him in his Passion and Death, suffering with Him according to Her power with heavenly humility and fortitude. Thus, as She coöperated in his Passion and offered Herself as a victim for the human race, so the same Lord made Her a participant in his dignity of Redeemer and placed Her in charge of the merits and fruits of the Redemption, to be distributed by her own hand and communicated to the redeemed. O, admirable Treasurer of God! How secure are in thy heavenly and bountiful hands the riches of the Omnipotent! Hence this City "had three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west," etc. The three gates, corresponding to each of the four quarters of the world, invite all the mortals to draw near to Him, who is the Creator of all, namely, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Each of the three Persons, desires and ordains, that most holy Mary should be in possession of the gates for soliciting the divine treasures for mortals. Although there is but one God in three Persons, each one for Himself concedes free entrance and admission to this most pure Queen, in order that before the tribunal of the immutable and triune Being She may intercede, solicit and receive gifts and graces for those that seek Her and honor Her in the world. Therefore as there are not one, but three portals in every direction, none of the mortals anywhere in the universe and of any nation and tribe shall have an excuse. The entrance into free and open city gates is so easy, that if any one fails to enter, it is not because the gates prevent him, but because he himself tarries and does not wish to seek safety. What then shall the infidels, heretics and pagans say? and what ex-

cuse have the bad Christians and the obstinate sinners? If the treasures of heaven are in the hands of our Mother and Lady, if She continues to call us and solicit us through her angels, if She opens not one but many gates to heaven, how is it that there are so many who remain outside and so few who enter through them?

276. "And the walls of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the twelve names of the apostles of the Lamb." The strong and unshakable foundations, upon which God built up the holy City of Mary his Mother, are her virtues, as governed and proportioned in Her by the Holy Ghost. He enumerated twelve, corresponding with the names of the Apostles, in order to show that it is founded upon the surpassing sanctity of the Apostles, who are the leaders among the saints. For according to the saying of David, the foundations of the city of God are placed upon the holy mountains, and also inversely, the sanctity and wisdom of Mary grounded and confirmed the Apostles after the Death and Ascension of Christ. Although She was always their Instructress and model, yet in those times She alone was the chief support of the primitive Church. Now, because She was destined and endowed for this office by the corresponding virtues and gifts from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, therefore they are called the twelve foundations of this City of God.

277. "And he that spoke with me had a measure of reed, of gold, and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs," etc. By these measurements the Evangelist alludes to the great mysteries of the dignity, graces and gifts and merits contained in the Mother of God. Although the measurements of the dignity and benefits, which the Almighty conferred upon Her, were exceedingly great, yet they were within pos-

sibility and they were also well proportioned. "And the length thereof is as great as the breadth." From all sides She is equally well formed, without a sign of deficiency, inequality or disproportion. I do not expatiate thereon, but refer to what I will say about this in the course of this history of her life. But I desire to mention that the measure of the dignity, the merits and graces of most holy Mary, was none other than the humanity of her most blessed Son, united to the divine Word.

278. The Evangelist calls the humanity of Christ a "reed" because He assumed the frailty of our weak and carnal nature, and "of gold," on account of his Divinity. In accordance with the dignity of the true God-man, Christ, and correspondingly with the gifts and merits of the incarnate God, also his most holy Mother was measured. He it was who measured Her with Himself, and She, being thus proportioned, seemed in her office as Mother, exalted to a dignity corresponding to his. In the length of her gifts and graces, and in the breadth of her merits, in all things did She seem well proportioned without defect. She could not be equal absolutely to her most holy Son with an equality which the learned call mathematical; for Christ our Lord was true God and man, whereas She was a mere creature and thus the measure exceeded infinitely that which was measured by it; yet the most pure Mary was adjusted according to a certain equality of proportion to her divine Son. Just as there was wanting in Him nothing that corresponds and belongs to his dignity as the true Son of God, so nothing was wanting, nor was there any defect in that, which was due to Her as true Mother of that same God, in such a manner that to Her as Mother of God, and to Christ as Son of God, were

conceded equal proportions of dignity, graces, gifts and merits. There was no created grace in Christ, which was not held in its proportion also by his most pure Mother.

279. The Evangelist says: "And he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs." This measure of "stadia" and the number "twelve thousand" with which the heavenly Queen at her Conception was measured, indicate most exalted mysteries. The Evangelist calls the perfect measure, by which are measured the high sanctity of the predestined, "stadia," thereby rêferring to the graces and gifts, which God in his eternal foreknowledge decreed to communicate through the incarnate Son, adjusting and pre-ordaining these gifts with infinite equity and mercy. By these stadia then are measured all the saints and the heights of their virtues and merits. Most unhappy he who does not come up to this measure and who cannot be measured by it when the Lord shall measure him. The number twelve thousand is used in order to include all the rest of the elect and the predestined, headed in their thousands by the twelve Apostles, the princes of the Catholic Church. In the same way they are mentioned in the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse under the leadership of the twelve tribes of Israel. For all the elect must submit to the teaching of the Apostles of the Lamb, as I have already said above (No. 273).

280. From all this can be estimated the greatness of that City of God, the most holy Mary. For if we assume that the stadium which the Evangelist mentions measures at least 125 steps, then a city that extends 12,000 furlongs or stadia on each of its four sides and in its height, must appear of huge dimensions. The measurement and number of stadia of all the predes-

tined taken together was found to be equal to that of our blessed Lady, the most holy Mary, and their length, breadth and height was not greater than hers. For She that was to be the Mother of God himself and the Queen and the Mistress of all creatures, was equal to them joined in one mighty host. In Her alone was contained more than in all the rest of creation.

281. "And he measured the wall thereof a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel." This measure of the walls of the City of God, was not of their length, but of their height. For if the length and the width of the city were twelve thousand stadia, making a perfect square, it was certainly necessary that the walls should extend still farther on the outside in order to encompass the city. The measure of one hundred and forty-four cubits (of whatever length these might be), was certainly too short for a city of that extent; but that measurement would very well fit the height of the walls and would be well adapted for the security and defense of those dwelling therein. This measurement of their height indicates the security of all the gifts and graces which the Almighty conferred on most holy Mary as befitting her dignity and sanctity. In order to make this more plain, it is said that the height was one hundred, forty, and four cubits, an unequal number, referring to three walls: a high one, a medium sized and a small one, and corresponding to the activity of the Queen of heaven in great, in more ordinary and insignificant things. Not that in Her there was anything insignificant, but because the object matter of her actions was of different kinds, and so were also her actions themselves. Some were miraculous and supernatural, others belonged to the sphere of the moral virtues, and these latter again were either interior or exterior. All

of them She performed with such a plenitude of perfection that She omitted not the unimportant obligations on account of the important ones, nor did the latter suffer on account of her exactitude in the former. She fulfilled them all with such an exalted holiness, and with such full approbation of the Lord that She was measured with the standard of her most holy Son, as well in the natural as in the supernatural sphere of her life. It was the measure of the Godman himself, the Angel of the great council, excelling all men and angels. With Him She, as his Mother, was exalted above them in proportion to her dignity. The Evangelist continues and says:

282. "And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper-stone." The walls of a city most conspicuously strike and engage the eyes of the beholder. The variety of colors and hues that distinguish the jasper-stone here mentioned as composing the walls of Mary, the City of God, bespeak the ineffable humility with which all the excellencies and graces of the great Queen were clothed and permeated. For although She was the worthy Mother of her Creator, exempt from all stain of sin and imperfection, She exhibits Herself to the view of mortals as dependent upon and as it were tinted with the shades of the ordinary laws, to which the daughters of Adam are subject; for She subjected Herself to the penalties and necessities of our common life, as I shall describe later on. Nevertheless this wall of jasper, though apparently displaying these color-tints of the rest of womankind, was to serve as an invincible defense of the city. Inside, as the Evangelist says, the city was of "pure gold, like to most pure and flawless glass," for neither in the formation of the most holy Mary, nor afterwards, during her most innocent life, did She ever admit any stain, which could obscure her crystalline

clearness. For just as any stain or blemish, even if only the size of an atom, finding its way into glass during its formation will never disappear so as to leave no visible trace and will always interfere with its transparency and purity; so, if the most pure Mary had contracted in her Conception the blemish or stain of original sin, it would always be discernible and forever degrade and prevent her crystalline purity and transparency. Neither would She be pure Gold, since her sanctity and gifts would contain the slack of original sin, lessening its fineness by many carats; hence, this City was "gold, like the purest glass," because She was most pure and like unto the Divinity.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONTAINS THE LAST PORTION OF APOCALYPSE XXI IN AS FAR AS IT DESCRIBES THE CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY.

283. The text of the third and last part of chapter twenty-first of the Apocalypse which I saw explained is as follows:

19. "And the foundations and the wall were adorned by all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20. The fifth, sardony, the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasus; the eleventh, hyacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

21. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each; and every special gate was of one several pearl; and the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

22. And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.

23. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.

24. And the nations shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it.

25. And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day; for there shall be no night there.

26. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

27. There shall not enter into it anything defiled, or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the book of life of the lamb."

So far the text and letter of the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse, which I saw explained.

284. The Almighty having chosen the holy city of Mary for his habitation, and She being of all things outside of God the most fit and appropriate, it was not improper that, from the treasures of his Divinity and from the merits of his most holy Son, He should adorn the foundations of this city's wall with all manner of precious stones. The fortitude and strength of Mary, typified by the walls, the beauty and excellence of her sanctity and graces, symbolized by the precious stones, her wonderful Conception, suggested by the foundations, were all well proportioned by God in regard to each other and in regard to the exalted end, for which this City was founded, namely, that God should live within it by his love and that from the virginal womb of Mary He might accept his human nature. All this the Evangelist describes just as he sees it in the most holy Mary. For on account of the dignity, sanctity and stability which were required in Her as a dwelling-place and as a stronghold of God, it was befitting that the foundation walls of this City, which prefigure the beginnings of her Immaculate Conception, should be built of such eminently precious stones or virtues that none more rich or precious could ever be found.

285. "The first foundation," or stone, he says, "was jasper," whose variegated tints and durability indicate the constancy and fortitude, which from the moment of her Conception was infused into this great Lady in

order that during the course of her life She might continue to exercise all the virtues with invincible magnanimity and constancy. The virtues and habits, conceded and infused into the most holy Mary at her Conception and typified by these precious stones, at the same time are connected with special privileges, and I will as far as possible, explain them, in order that the full mystery of these twelve foundations may become known. This gift of strength included a special superiority and sovereignty for repressing, subduing and vanquishing the ancient serpent, and for inspiring all the demons with an inexpressible terror. On that account they fly from Her and fear Her from afar, being filled with trembling at her mere presence. They cannot come near the most holy Mary without excruciating pain. So liberal was divine Providence with her Majesty that She was not only exempt from the common laws of the children of Adam, but also freed from original guilt as well as from subjection to the demon contracted thereby. Setting Her apart from these evils, He at the same time endowed Her with sovereign power over the devil, which all men have lost together with their innocence. More than that: as Mother of the Son of the eternal Father (whom She bore in her womb for the very purpose of putting an end to the evil power of the enemies) She was invested with actual authority which emanated from God himself and in virtue of which this most exalted Mistress subdued the demons and sent them repeatedly to the infernal dungeons, as I will relate farther on.

286. "The second, sapphire." This stone imitates the color of the clear and serene firmament and shows a scattering of gold spots or atoms. Its color typifies the serenity and tranquillity of the gifts and graces of the most holy Mary, enabling Her to enjoy an unchanging,

heavenly and serene peace, free from any cloud of disorder and illumined from the moment of her Conception with visions of the Divinity. By the likeness of her virtues to the divine attributes and by her participation in them, especially in their unchangeableness, She made Herself worthy to see God. Many times during her pilgrimage through life was She favored with unveiled and clear vision of God, as will be described. In virtue of this singular privilege the Almighty endowed Her with the power of communicating tranquillity and peace of spirit to those, who will ask for her intercession. Therefore let all the faithful, who are agitated and stirred up by the tormenting anxiety of their vices, pray to Her, that so they may obtain from Her this gift of peace.

287. "The third, a chalcedony." This stone takes its name from the country where it is found. It is of the color of the ruby and in the night resplendent as a beaconlight. The hidden signification of this stone points to the holiness and power of the name of Mary. For She took her name from that part of the world, where She first came into being, calling herself a daughter of Adam, and her name, by the mere change of the accent signifies in Latin the collective oceans, for She was the ocean of the graces and gifts of the Divinity. She came into the world in her Immaculate Conception, submerging and inundating it with these gifts, sweeping off the malice of sin and its effects, illuminating the darkness of the abyss with the light of her spirit and the brightness of her heavenly wisdom. This foundation-stone signifies that the Most High conceded to her most holy name the power to disperse the clouds of infidelity spread over the earth, and to destroy the errors of heresy, of paganism, idolatry and all uncertainty in matters of the Catholic faith. If the infidels would turn toward this light by

invoking Mary's name, it is certain that their understanding would quickly expel the darkness, their errors would be drowned as in a sea in virtue of the power conceded to Her from on high.

288. "The fourth, an emerald," the color of which is a pleasant green, delighting the sight without fatigue. It mysteriously typifies the graces of the most holy Mary in her Conception for, being most amiable and gracious in the eyes of God and his creatures. She preserved in Herself, without the least offense against his name and memory, all the verdure and strength of the holiness, virtues and gifts then conferred upon Her. Accordingly the Most High granted Her the privilege of insuring a like stability to her devout followers, obtaining for them perseverance and fidelity in the friendship of God and in the practice of virtue.

289. "The fifth, sardonyx." This stone is transparent, though favoring the flesh-color and usually containing three different tints: dark below, whitish in the centre, and nacreous or like mother-of-pearl above, a most graceful variety of color. The mysterious signification of this stone pointed to the close relation between the Mother and the Son, whom She was to bring forth. The dark color points to the inferior and terrestrial portion of the body of Mary, obscured by mortification and labors during her stay on earth, and also to the humanity of her Son, obscured by taking upon Himself our guilt. The white typifies the purity of the soul of Mary, the Virgin, and of Christ, our highest good. The carnation bespeaks in Him the hypostatical union of his humanity and Divinity, and in Mary her participation in the love of her most holy Son, and her communication in all the splendors of the Divinity. In virtue of this foundation-stone the great Queen of heaven enjoys the power of

interceding and obtaining for her clients the efficacious application of the superabundant merits of the Incarnation and Redemption, including also a special devotion toward the mysteries and the life of Christ our Lord through his merits.

290. "The sixth, sardius." This stone is transparent, and because it at the same time flashes like the clear flame of a fire, it is the symbol of the flame of divine love, which incessantly burns in the Queen of heaven, for there is no cessation nor diminution of that conflagration of love in her bosom. From the very moment of her Conception, which was the time and place of its beginning, it continued to grow, and now, having reached that highest state of exaltation, which ever can fall to the lot of a creature, it burns and shall burn still brighter through all the eternities. This includes her privilege of distributing the influence, the love and the gifts of the Holy Ghost to those who ask in her name.

291. "The seventh, chrysolite." This stone resembles in its color gold refulgent with flaming fire; and this latter is more apt to show itself by night than by day. It symbolized the ardent love which Mary entertains for the Church militant, its ministers, and for the law of grace in particular. This love shone forth more especially during the night of the Death of her most holy Son, also during the time, when in the beginnings of the evangelical law, She held the office of teacher and when She prayed so ardently for the establishment of the Church and its Sacraments. In those times, as will be said in its place, She coöperated by her most burning love toward the salvation of the whole human race. She alone knew and appreciated the value of the most holy law of her Son. With this love She was prepared and endowed from the moment of her Conception in order to be the

Coadjutrix of Christ our Lord. This includes the prerogative of being able to obtain for those that invoke Her, the grace of a good disposition toward the fruitful reception of the Sacraments of the holy Church and of clearing away obstacles that prevent their full effects.

292. "The eighth, beryl." This stone is of a green and yellow color; but the green predominates, having a great resemblance to olive and being of resplendent brilliancy. It represents the singular faith and hope given to Mary in her Conception, enabling Her to understand and execute arduous and sublime works, such as She in reality accomplished for the glory of Her Creator. In virtue of this gift of unfailing assistance of the Lord, was conferred upon Her the power to endow her servants with fortitude and patience in the tribulations and difficulties of their undertakings.

293. "The ninth, topaz." This stone is transparent and of a mulberry color, much prized and esteemed. It represents the most honorable virginity of Mary, our Mistress, and her mothership in regard to the incarnate Word; moreover during her whole life these two prerogatives were held by Her as of inestimable value and worthy of the most humble thanks. At the instant of her Conception She asked the Most High for the virtue of chastity and She promised the observance of it during the rest of her earthly life. She was aware that it was conceded to Her in a degree far above her vows and desires. Not only that, but She knew that the Lord had made Her the Teacher and the Guide of all the virgins and lovers of chastity, and that through her intercession, She could obtain these virtues and perseverance in them for all her devotees.

294. "The tenth, chrysoprase," the color of which is green with touches of gold. It signified the most firm

hope planted in the heart of the most holy Mary at her Conception, and the love with which it was impregnated and embellished. Hope lived inextinguishably in the bosom of our Queen, as was befitting for Her who was to communicate similar quality to the rest of mankind. The firmness of her confidence was founded in the stability of her high and generous nature during all the labors and exercises of her most holy life, and especially in the Passion and Death of her most holy Son. At the same time with this virtue the power of efficacious mediation was given Her, so that She might obtain the same firmness of hope for her clients.

295. "The eleventh, hyacinth," which is of an exquisite violet color. In this foundation-stone is disclosed the love of Mary for the Redemption of the human race. This love was infused into Her at her Conception and was applied to Her in view of the merits of the death of the Redeemer, her Son. As the whole remedy of guilt and the justification of all the souls was to take its rise from the Redemption, this love of the great Queen for the Redemption from that first instant, earned Her the power of demanding that no sinner, how great and abominable soever he might be, should be excluded from the fruit of the Redemption and justification, nor fail to attain eternal life if he invoked the intercession of this powerful Lady and Advocate.

296. "The twelfth, amethyst," of a refulgent violet color. The mystery of this stone or foundation corresponds in part with that of the first. It imports a kind of inherent power conceded to the most holy Mary from the moment of her Conception against all the devilish host, so that the demons, without any command or action on her part, feel a distressing and torturing force proceeding from Her, as soon as they wish to approach

her presence. It was given to Her as a reward of her incomparable zeal in exalting and defending the glory and honor of God. Hence the mere sound of her sweetest name is sufficient to expel from the bodies of men the malignant spirits. For her holy name is so powerful that at the mere intimation of it, they are overcome and deprived of strength. These are in short the mysteries of the foundations upon which God built the holy City of Mary. But they point to many other mysteries and favors received by Her, and in so far as the Lord will give me light and strength, I will manifest them in the farther course of this history.

297. The Evangelist proceeds and says: "And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each; and every several gate was of one several pearl." The great number of gates of this mystical City signify that through most holy Mary and through her ineffable dignity and merits, the entrance to life everlasting was to be just as easy as it is free. It was in a manner due and befitting to the excellence of this exalted Queen, that in Her and through Her the infinite mercy of the Most High should magnify itself by opening all the many ways of communication with the Divinity, and that all mortals, if they wished to make use of her merits and powerful intercession, should enter into participation of the Divinity. The priceless value, magnificence, beauty and fairness of these twelve gates, constructed of pearls, imply the greatness of the dignity and grace of this Empress of heaven, and the sweetness of her delightful name, which draws mortals toward God. The most holy Mary knew that the Lord had bestowed upon Her the prerogative of being the special Mediatrix of the human race and the Dispensatrix of the treasures of the Divinity for her Son; and therefore the prudent and most diligent

Mistress exerted Herself to make the merits and dignity of her works so precious and excellent that they are the astonishment of the blessed in heaven. Thus the gates of that city were indeed precious pearls in the sight of the Lord and of men.

298. Accordingly it is said: "And the square of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass." The piazza or square of that City of God, most holy Mary, is its interior or her soul. Here, as in a square or marketplace, all the life converges and here the commerce and trade of the republic of the soul is transacted; for it is the centre of the activity of the senses and other faculties. This square in the most holy Mary was of purest and transparent gold, because composed of the wisdom and love of God himself. Never was it affected by dullness, ignorance or inattention; all her thoughts were most exalted and her affections were inflamed with immeasurable love. On this square the highest mysteries of the Divinity were deliberated, from this square were heard the words "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum," which gave a beginning to the most exalted work that God ever accomplished or will ever accomplish; there the innumerable petitions in favor of the human race were devised and sent up to the tribunal of God; there those riches were amassed, which will expel poverty from all the world, if men will enter into commerce with it; there also is the armory against the demons and all vice. For in most holy Mary are the graces and virtues, which make Her terrible to hell and which afford us courage to overcome the devilish host.

299. He says farther: "And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb." The temples of the cities serve as places of prayer and worship to be rendered to God; and it would

be a great defect, if in the City of God there were no temple befitting its greatness and excellence. Hence in this City of holy Mary is so sacred a temple that the omnipotent God himself and the Lamb itself, that is: the humanity and the Divinity of his Onlybegotten Son, are reverenced and adored in spirit, and more worthily than in all the temples of the world; for He dwelt in Her as in his proper habitation. He was also Himself the temple of Mary, since She was encompassed, surrounded and enclosed by the Divinity and the humanity, both of which served Her as a habitation and a tabernacle. For being in God, she never ceased to adore, worship and petition this same God and incarnate Word within her womb thus in spirit living in God and in the Lamb as in a temple since her continual sanctity was befitting to such a temple. In order to think worthily of this heavenly Mistress, we must always consider Her as enclosed in the Divinity and in her most holy Son as in a temple. Thus shall we understand what acts and processes of love, adoration and reverence, were accomplished by Her; what delights She experienced in the same Lord, what petitions arose in Her for the human race, and how earnestly, from her inmost heart and with burning charity, She cried and begged for the salvation of mortals, when in spirit She saw the great necessity of their salvation.

300. Further says the Evangelist: "And the city hath no need of the sun and the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." The sun and the moon, are not necessary in the presence of greater light than their own; and thus, in the empyrean heaven, where the infinite Suns give their light, the absence of our sun is no defect, though it is so resplendent and beautiful In the most

holy Mary, our Queen, there was no need of created sun or moon to enlighten and direct Her; for without comparison She pleased and delighted God. Nor could the wisdom, sanctity and perfection of her works have any other teacher and director, than the Sun of justice itself, her most holy Son. All other creatures were far too deficient to assist Her in being a worthy Mother of her Creator. Nevertheless in this same school of the Lord She learned to be the most humble and obedient among the humble and obedient. Though She was taught by God himself, yet She hesitated not to supplicate and obey the most abject among men in those things in which it was not unbecoming. Being the disciple of Him, who corrects the wise, She drew the divine philosophy of humility from Him, her great Master. And She rose to such wisdom, that the Evangelist could say:

301. "And the nations shall walk in the light of it:" for if Christ our Lord, calls the doctors and saints burning lights, placed upon the candlestick to enlighten the Church: lights such as were scattered through the ages in the Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and Doctors, filling the Catholic Church with such effulgence, that it appears to be a heaven with many suns and moons: what shall we say of the most holy Mary, whose light and splendor incomparably exceeds all the doctors and teachers of the Church, yea that of the angels of heaven? If only the mortals were possessed of clear sight to see the splendor of the light of the most holy Mary, it alone would suffice to enlighten every man in the world and to illumine for them the paths of heaven. Therefore, because all those who have attained to the knowledge of God, walked in the light of this

holy City, St. John says: "that the nations have walked in the light of it." Moreover he adds most truly:

302. "And the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and their honor into it." Very blessed are those kings and princes, who with happy zeal use their power and influence to fulfill this prophecy. All of them should do so; but fortunate are they, that turn with sincere affection to most holy Mary, employing their life, their honor, their riches, and their high position in the defense of that City of God, extending her glory in the world and magnifying her name in the Catholic Church in opposition to the crackbrained madness of heretics and infidels. With the deepest sorrow I behold Catholic princes, who are remiss in seeking the favor of this Queen, fail to ask her assistance in the great dangers of their states, and do not look upon Her as a refuge and protection, as an Intercessor and Advocate. If the dangers of kings and potentates are great, let them remember, that their obligation to be thankful is not any less; for this heavenly Queen herself says, that through Her kings do reign, princes command, and the powerful administer justice (Prov. 8, 16); She loves those that love Her (Eccli. 14, 31) and those, that magnify Her, attain eternal life, since those, that work with Her do not sin.

303. I do not wish to conceal the light, which many times and especially on this occasion, has been vouchsafed to me in order to be made known to others. In the Lord it was shown me, that all the afflictions of the Catholic Church and all the labors of the Christian people, have been invariably mitigated by the intercession of the most holy Mary; that in the turbulence of the present times, when heretical pride surges up so high against God and his lamentably afflicted Church, only

one remedy is left for these miseries, namely: That the Catholic kings and governments turn to the Mother of grace and mercy, most holy Mary. Let them seek her favor by rendering Her especial homage, so that the devotion and honor of Mary may grow and spread over the whole earth and thus draw Her toward us with a look of pity. Then it may be, that She will obtain for us the grace of her most holy Son, that all the unbridled vices now infecting the Christian people through malice of the enemy, will be reformed, and through her intercession the wrath of the Lord, which so justly chastises us and threatens us with yet greater calamities and misfortunes, will be appeased. From this reformation and amendment of our sins would also spring victory against the infidels and the extirpation of the false sects, that oppress the holy Church. For the most holy Mary is the sword, which is to destroy and cut them down all over the world.

304. Even now the world suffers the losses consequent upon this forgetfulness. If the Catholic kings are not successful in the government of their countries, in the preservation and the spread of the Catholic faith, in overcoming their enemies, or in the warfares and battles against the infidels, all this happens, because they do not follow this guiding Star, which shows them the way; because they have not placed Mary as the beginning and immediate end of their works and projects and because they forget that this Queen treads in the paths of justice in order to teach it, exalts and enriches those that love it (Prov. 8, 20).

305. O thou prince and head of the holy Catholic Church! O ye prelates, who are also called princes of the Church! And thou, Catholic prince and monarch of Spain, to whom, according to my natural obligation and

through the great love and special providence of the Most High, I direct this humble and earnest appeal! Cast thy crown, thy monarchy at the feet of this Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth; seek out this Restoratrix of all the human race; listen to Her, who by power divine is placed over all the hosts of men and of all the infernal regions; turn thy affection toward Her, who holds in her hands the keys of the good will and treasures of the Most High; transport thy honor and renown of that City of God, who has no need thereof in order to increase hers, but who can improve and exalt thy own! Offer to Her with Catholic enthusiasm and with a whole heart some great and pleasing service, and the recompense will be immeasurably great: the conversion of the heathens, the victory over heresies and paganism, the peace of the Church, new light and help to improve the lives of men and a great and glorious reign for thee in this life and the next.

306. O my fatherland, kingdom of Spain, which on account of thy Catholic faith, art most fortunate! Even more fortunate shalt thou be if to the steadfastness and sincerity of thy faith, given to thee by the Almighty, thou wilt add the holy fear of God corresponding to thy distinguished faith! Would that in order to arrive at this summit of thy happiness, all thy inhabitants unite in a burning devotion to the most holy Mary! How greatly would thy glory then shine forth! How much wouldst thou be enlightened! How valiantly wouldst thou then be protected and defended by this Queen, and how would thy Catholic kings be enriched by treasures from on high, and through their agency, how widely would the sweet law of the Gospel spread among the nations! Remember that this great Princess honors those that honor Her, enriches those that seek Her,

makes illustrious those that praise Her, and defends those that hope in Her. Be assured, that in order thus to show Herself a Mother and shower her mercies upon thee, She hopes and desires to be approached and solicited. At the same time remember, that God is under no necessity to any one (Ps. 15, 2) and that He can make out of stones, children of Abraham (Luc. 3, 8); if thou make thyself unworthy of such great good, He can reserve this glory for those that serve Him better and make themselves less unworthy of the reward.

307. And in order that thou mayest not remain ignorant of the service, which in our days (among many others taught thee by the devotion and piety), should be rendered to this great Queen and Mistress of men, consider the present position, which the mystery of her Immaculate Conception holds in the Catholic Church and direct thy attention to supply what is still missing to establish firmly this fundamental doctrine of that City of God. Let no one despise this suggestion as coming from a weak and ignorant woman, or as a notion founded in a prejudiced love of a state and profession consecrated to the name and honor of Mary immaculate; for the conviction and light, which I have received in the knowledge of her life, is sufficient for me. Not for my own honor, nor relying upon my own judgment and authority, do I make this exhortation: I obey the command of the Lord, who gives speech to the mute, and makes eloquent the tongues of infants. Let those that admire this merciful liberality, also take notice of what the Evangelist adds, saying:

308. "And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day: for there shall be no night there." The portals of mercy of most holy Mary never were and never are closed, nor was there in Her from the first instant of her Con-

ception, any darkness of guilt, which might close the gates of this City, as it happened in the rest of the saints. Just as in those places, where gates are always open, all those that wish, can issue forth or enter at all times, so no prohibition hinders mortals from entering freely to the Divinity through the gates of the mercy of the most pure Mary. For in that City is the storehouse of the treasures of heaven, open to all without limitation of time, place, age or sex. All were free to enter ever since its foundation; for that very purpose the Most High has opened so many portals in this foundation, leaving them unlocked, free and open to the light, so that from the first moment of Mary's purest Conception mercies and benefits began to descend upon the whole human race. But though this City has so many gates, from which issue the riches of the Divinity, yet it is on that account not the less secure from its enemies. Therefore the text proceeds:

309. "There shall not enter into it anything defiled, or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb," etc. Rehearsing again the glories of the City of God, the Evangelist closes this twenty-first chapter, assuring us once more, that there was no blemish in Her, because She received an immaculate body and soul. This, however, never could be said of Her, if She was tainted by original guilt; and much less have stains or blemishes of actual sins ever found entrance in Her. That which entered into this City of God is entirely similar to that which is written of the Lamb: her most holy Son was taken as the pattern and model for her formation and from no other being could any excellence of the most holy Mary be copied, even when there is question of the smallest, if indeed anything can be called small in

Her. Since this portal, Mary, was to be the portal of a city of refuge for the mortals, it could only be with the understanding, that he, who is the perpetrator of abomination and lies, should never find part or entrance through it. But let not on this account the sinful and guilty sons of Adam hesitate to approach the gates of this holy City of God; for if they approach with contrition and humility to seek the cleansing of grace, they will find it in these gates of the great Queen, and in no others. She is clean, pure, abounding in grace, and above all She is the Mother of mercy; She is sweet, loving and powerful to enrich our poverty and to cleanse us from the stains of all our sins.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME CONCERNING THESE CHAPTERS.

310. My daughter, these chapters contain excellent direction and light, though thou hast left in them many things unsaid. Seek therefore to draw profit from all that thou hast understood and written, bewaring lest thou receive the light of grace in vain. This in brief I wish thee to remember; be not dismayed, that thou wert conceived in sin, and, as an earthly creature, feelest within thyself the earthly inclinations; but strive against thy passions to a finish. In doing this thou wilt at the same time battle against thy enemies. With the help of the Almighty's grace, thou canst rise above thyself and make thyself a daughter of heaven, whence all grace comes. In order that thou mayest attain thereto, let thy habitation continue to be in the higher regions, keeping thy mind fixed in the knowledge of the immutable Being and perfections of God and never allowing thy attention to be drawn away to another even otherwise necessary object. With this continual presence and

memory of God's greatness thou wilt dispose thyself for the influx of the holy Spirit and his gifts in closest friendship and communication with the Lord. In order to evade all hindrance to this his holy Will, which I have already many times pointed out and made manifest to thee, seek to mortify the inferior part of thy being, the seat of the evil inclinations and passions. Die to all that is earthly, sacrifice, in the consciousness of God's presence, all thy sensitive appetities, fulfill none of their impulses, nor ever satisfy thy own will outside of the narrow limits of obedience. Do not leave the secret refuge of interior recollection, where the Lamb enlightens thee. Adorn thyself for entrance into the bridal chamber of thy Spouse, and permit the hand of the Almighty to array thee in such a manner as He wishes, always seeking to concur with Him and place no obstacle in his way. Purify thy soul by many acts of sorrow for having offended Him, magnify and praise Him with a most ardent love. Seek Him, and rest not until thou hast found Him, whom thy soul desires, hold Him and do not let Him go (Cant. 3, 4). I wish thee to proceed on thy pilgrimage like one, who has already arrived at the journey's end, keeping thy gaze continually on the source of all glory. Let the rule of thy life be to walk in the light of faith and in the brightness, with which the Omnipotent shall fill and illumine thy soul, and to continue to love, adore and reverence Him, without any cessation or diminution. This being the will of the Almighty in thy regard: consider what shall be thy gain, but remember also, what may be thy loss. See thou do not run this risk; subject thyself with thy whole will and being to the guidance of thy Spouse, of myself, and of holy obedience, which must always be thy standard. —Thus the Mother of the Lord instructed me, and I answered Her, filled with great confusion:

311. "Queen and Mistress of all creation, whose servant I am and wish to be for all the eternities! Forever will I praise the Omnipotence of the Most High, because He chose thus to exalt Thee. But since Thou art so fortunate and so powerful with the Almighty, I conjure Thee, O my Lady, to look with an eye of mercy upon me, thy poor and miserable servant. Make me partaker in the gifts which the Lord has placed in thy hands for distribution among the needy, raise me up from my abject state, enrich my nakedness and poverty, and as a Mistress compel me to desire and do what is most perfect, helping me to find grace in the eyes of thy most holy Son and my Lord. In thy hands do I place my salvation, O Mistress and Queen! do Thou take charge of it to the end; for thy desires are holy and powerful on account of the merits of thy most holy Son and on account of the promises of the most holy Trinity, which are pledges for the fulfillment of all thy petitions and desires without fail. I myself have nothing to oblige Thee, as I am unworthy, but as a substitute I offer Thee, my Lady, thy own sanctity and clemency."

CHAPTER XX.

TREATING OF WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE NINE MONTHS OF THE PREGNANCY OF ST. ANNE; THE DOINGS OF THE MOST HOLY MARY IN THE WOMB OF HER MOTHER, AND THOSE OF SAINT ANNE DURING THAT TIME.

312. The most holy Mary, being conceived without sin as described above, was entirely absorbed in spirit and entranced by her first vision of the Divinity. At the first instant, and in the narrow dwelling of the maternal womb, began the love of God in her most blessed soul, never to be interrupted, but to continue through all the eternities of that high glory, which She now enjoys at the right hand of her divine Son. In order that She might grow in the contemplation and love of God not only by the infused knowledge of created things, but also by the direct vision of the Trinity itself, and in order that She might exercise Herself in many acts of virtue befitting her present state, the Lord repeated the wonderful vision and manifestation of his Divinity on two other occasions; so that, the blessed Trinity manifested Itself to Her in abstract vision three times before her birth: first at the instant of her Conception, then in the fourth or fifth month, and the third time, on the day before her birth This vision was not continual, but it must not be inferred, that She did not enjoy another kind of vision, very exalted and superior to the one by which She perceived the essence of God in the light of faith. For in most holy Mary these kinds of visions

were incessant and continual, and superior to all visions of the saints during their earthly pilgrimage.

313. This abstract vision of the Divinity, though not incompatible with her present condition on earth, was nevertheless so high and immediate, that it could not well be continuous in her mortal state, where She was to merit the glory of intuitive vision by other acts. It was a special favor to assist Her in attaining thereto; for it left in her soul the impress of the Lord's image, and raised and consumed her whole being with a burning love of God. These affections were renewed continually during these visions in the most holy soul of Mary while She remained in the womb of holy Anne. Thus it happened, that, being in full possession of her intellectual faculties and occupying Herself without intermission in prayer for the human race, in heroic acts of adoration, in reverence and love of God in company with the angels, She did not feel the narrowness and confinement of her natural prison, nor the restriction of her senses, nor the other restraints, inseparable from such a state. To all this She gave no heed, living more in her Beloved than in the womb of her mother or in Herself.

314. The last of the three visions was accompanied by new and more wonderful favors of the Lord; it was to prepare Her for the entrance into the world and for intercourse with mortals. In accordance with the divine will the Princess of heaven said to the Lord: "Most high God, Lord of my being, Soul of my life and Life of my soul, infinite in thy attributes and perfections, incomprehensible, mighty and rich in mercies, my King and Sovereign: out of nothing hast Thou given me existence; without any merits of mine Thou hast enriched me with the treasures of thy divine light and grace, in order that by them I may instantly perceive thy im-

mutable Being and divine perfections, and that thus Thou mightst be the first Object of my vision and love, not permitting me to seek any other than Thee, the highest Good and all my joy. Thou commandest me, my Lord, to issue forth and enter into the material light and converse with creatures. In thy own Being, whence all things are reflected as in a most perfect mirror, I have discerned the dangerous state and the miseries of mortal life. If, on account of my natural weakness and debility, there is danger lest even in the least point I fail in thy love and service, and if it is possible that I die here, let me die now, before I pass into a state where I may lose Thee. But if thy holy Will, my Lord and Master, is to be fulfilled, and I am to embark on the tempestuous sea of this world, I beseech Thee, most high and mighty God of my soul, to govern my life, direct my steps and all my actions toward pleasing Thee. Order in me holy love (Cant. 2, 4) that in the new use, which I am to make of creatures, and by thy aid, it may continue to grow. I have perceived in Thee the ingratitude of many souls, and as I am of their nature, I fear with good reason, that perhaps I may become guilty of the same fault. In this narrow cavity of my mother's womb I have enjoyed the infinite vastness of thy Divinity: here I possessed all Good, Thee thyself, my Beloved; and since here Thou alone art my portion and possession (Ps. 72), I know not, whether outside of this enclosure I may not lose it at the sight of the created light and in the use of my senses. If it were possible and appropriate to renounce the intercourse of approaching life, I would gladly renounce and lose the experience of it; but let not my will, but Thine be done. Therefore since Thou wishest it, confer upon me thy blessing and good will at my entrance into the world, and do not deprive me of

thy divine protection during the earthly course in which Thou placest me." Having thus poured forth her prayer, the most sweet child Mary received the benediction of the Most High and the command to issue forth into the light of the visible sun, at the same time being enlightened for the fulfillment of all his desires.

315. The most happy mother, holy Anne, passed the days of her pregnancy altogether spiritualized by the divine operations and by the sweet workings of the Holy Ghost in all her faculties. Divine Providence, however, in order to direct her course to greater merit and reward, ordained, that the ballast of trouble be not wanting, for without it the cargo of grace and love is scarcely ever secure. In order to understand better, what happened to this holy woman, it must be remembered, that satan, after he was hurled with the other bad angels from heaven into the infernal torments, never ceased, during the reign of the old Law, to search through the earth hovering with lurking vigilance above the women of distinguished holiness, in order to find Her, whose sign he had seen (Gen. 3, 15) and whose heel was to bruise and crush his head. Lucifer's wrath against men was so fierce, that he would not trust this investigation to his inferiors alone; but leaving them to operate against the virtuous women in general, he himself attended to this matter and assiduously hovered around those, who signalized themselves more particularly in the exercise of virtue and in the grace of the Most High.

316. Filled with malice and astuteness, he observed closely the exceeding great holiness of the excellent matron Anne and all the events of her life: and although he could not estimate the richness of the Treasure, which was enclosed in her blessed womb (since the Lord concealed this as well as many other mysteries from him),

yet he felt a powerful influence proceeding from saint Anne. The fact that he could not penetrate into the source of this activity, threw him at times into great fury and rage. At other times he quieted himself with the thought, that this pregnancy arose from the same causes as others in the course of nature and that there was no special cause for alarm; for the Lord left him to his own hallucinations and to the vagaries of his own fury. Nevertheless the whole event was a source of great misgiving to this perverse spirit, when he saw how quietly her pregnancy took its course and especially, when he saw, that many angels stood in attendance. Above all he was enraged at his weakness in resisting the force, which proceeded from the blessed Anne and he suspected that it was not she alone, who was the cause of it.

317. Filled with this mistrust, the dragon determined, if possible, to take the life of the most felicitous Anne; or, if that was impossible, to see that she should obtain little satisfaction from her pregnancy. For the pride of Lucifer was so boundless as to persuade him of his ability to overcome or take away the life of Her, who was to be the Mother of the incarnate Word, or even the life of the Messias and Redeemer of the world, if only he could obtain knowledge of their whereabouts. His arrogance was founded upon the superiority of his angelic nature to the condition and power of mere human nature: as if both were not subject to grace and entirely dependent upon the will of their Creator. Audaciously therefore he set himself to tempt holy Anne, with many suggestions, misgivings, doubts and diffidences about the truth of her pregnancy, alleging her protracted years. All this the demon attempted in order to test the virtue of the saint, and to see, whether these temptations would

not afford some opening for the perversion of her will.

318. But the invincible matron resisted these onslaughts with humble fortitude, patience, continued prayer and vivid faith in the Lord. She brought to naught the perplexing lies of the dragon and on account of them gained only additional grace and protection from on high. For besides the protection abundantly merited by her past life She was defended and freed from the demons by the great princes, who were guarding her most holy Daughter. Nevertheless in his insatiable malice the enemy did not desist on that account; and since his arrogance and pride far exceeds his powers, he sought human aid; for with such help he always promises himself greater ease of victory. Having at first tried to overthrow the dwelling of saint Joachim and Anne, in order that she might be frightened and excited by the shock of its fall, but not being able to succeed on account of the resistance of the holy angels, he incited against saint Anne one of the foolish women of her acquaintance to quarrel with her. This the woman did with great fury, insolently attacking saint Anne with reproach and scorn; she did not hesitate to make mockery of her pregnancy, saying, that she was the sport of the demon in being thus found pregnant at the end of so many years and at so great an age.

319. The blessed Anne did not permit herself to be disturbed by this attack, but in all meekness and humility bore the injuries and treated her assailants with kindness. From that time on she looked with greater love upon these women and lavished upon them so much the greater benefits. But their wrath was not immediately pacified, for the demon had taken possession of them, filling them with hate against the saint; and, as any concession to this cruel tyrant always increases his

power over his victims, he incited these miserable dupes to plot even against the person and life of saint Anne. But they could not put their plots into execution, because divine power interfered to foil their natural womanly weakness. They were not only powerless against the saint, but they were overcome by her admonitions and brought to the knowledge and amendment of their evil course by her prayers.

320. The dragon was repulsed, but not vanquished; for he immediately availed himself of a servant, who lived in the house with Joachim and Anne, and exasperated her against the holy matron. Through her he created even a greater annoyance than through the other women, for she was a domestic enemy and more stubborn and dangerous than the others. I will not stay to describe, what the enemy attempted through this servant, since it was similar to that of the other woman, only more annoying and malicious. But with the help of God saint Anne won a more glorious victory than before; for the watcher of Israel slumbered not, but guarded his holy City (Ps. 120, 4) and furnished it so well with sentinels, chosen from the strongest of his hosts, that they put to ignominious flight Lucifer and his followers. No more were they allowed to molest the fortunate mother, who was already expecting the birth of the most blessed Princess of heaven, and who, enriched by heroic acts of virtue and many merits in these conflicts, had now arrived at the fulfillment of all her highest wishes. I too desire to come to an end with this chapter in order to hear the salutary instructions of my Mistress and Preceptress, who, besides assisting me in all that I write, also favors me with her maternal admonitions, which I receive with highest joy and exultation of my spirit.

321. Speak then, O Lady, and thy servant will listen (Gen. 18, 17). If Thou wilt permit, although I am dust and ashes, I will state a doubt, which has occurred to me, in this chapter. Yet in all things I will remit myself to thy sweet benevolence as of my Mother, Teacher and Mistress. The doubt in which I find myself is this: How was it possible, that Thou, the Queen of all creation, conceived without sin and endowed with a soul exalted so high in the knowledge of all things by the visions of the Divinity, shouldst be filled in spite of all these graces, with so great a fear and anxiety of losing the friendship of God and of offending Him? If in the first instant of thy existence Thou wast prevented by grace, how couldst Thou at that very instant fear to lose it? If the Most High exempted Thee from original sin, how couldst Thou fall into others, or fear to offend Him, who had preserved Thee from the first offense?

INSTRUCTION AND ANSWER OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

322. My daughter, hear the solution of thy difficulty. In the vision of the Divinity I instantaneously recognized my innocence and the stainlessness of my Conception. These favors and benefits of the Almighty are of such a nature, that the more they are understood and made secure, so much the more will they excite care and solicitude for their preservation and for the avoidance of any offense of their Author. They are given to his creatures out of pure goodness and are accompanied with such clear intuition regarding their dependence on the merits of my most holy Son, that the soul immediately centers its attention only on its own unworthiness and insufficiency, convinced that it cannot merit them and that it cannot appropriate them to itself as being foreign

to its nature. As they are seen to belong to such a high Master, to whom they can revert to be distributed according to his pleasure, a most deep-felt solicitude fills the soul lest it lose again, what is thus freely given. The soul therefore begins to work with great diligence in order to preserve them and to multiply the talent (Matth. 25, 15), since it understands that to be the only means of keeping the deposit and of fulfilling the object for which they were given, namely, to make them bear fruit and to contribute to the glory of the Creator. This care is precisely the condition necessary for the preservation of the benefits and graces received.

323. Besides this the soul is made to understand the human frailty and the freedom of the will for good or evil. Of this knowledge the Almighty did not deprive me, nor does He deprive any one of it, as long as he wanders through this life; but He gives it to all according to measure, in order that by its guidance they may be filled with holy fear of falling into any fault, even the smallest. In me this light was greater and I clearly saw that a small fault prepares the way for another, and that the second is only a punishment of the first. It is true that on account of the blessings and graces of the Lord sin was impossible in me. But his Providence so disposed of this knowledge, that my absolute security from sin was hidden to me; I saw that as far as depended on me alone I could fall, and that it was the divine will that preserved me. Thus He reserved to Himself his knowledge of my security, and left me in solicitude and holy fear of sinning during my pilgrimage. From the instant of my Conception until my death I never lost this fear, but on the contrary grew in it as life flowed on.

324. The Most High also gave me humility and discretion, not to ask or to examine too closely this mys-

tery, but solely to direct my attention toward increasing my confidence in his goodness with a view to obtain his assistance against sin. Thence resulted those two necessary dispositions of a Christian life; the one a quiet preservation of tranquillity in the soul, the other the constant presence of a holy fear and watchfulness, lest the treasure be lost. As this latter was a filial fear, it did not diminish love, but inflamed and increased it more and more. These two dispositions of love and fear produced in my soul a perfect harmony with the divine will, governing all my actions, so as to draw me away from evil and unite me with the highest Good.

325. This, my dear friend, is the great test of spiritual things: that they come with true enlightenment and sound doctrine; that they teach greater perfection of virtues and excite a strong impulse toward seeking it. This is the excellence of the benefits which descend from the Father of lights, that they give assurance and confidence while making the soul humble, and that they encourage while exciting solicitude and watchfulness, though still preserving tranquillity and peace in this solicitude; for all these effects are not incompatible in fulfilling the will of God. Do thou, O soul, offer humble and fervent thanks to the Lord, because with so little deserving of thine He has been so liberal with thee and has so greatly enlightened thee with divine light, breaking for thee the seal of his secret archives and yet filling thee with holy fear of his displeasure. Nevertheless make use of this fear with measure and strive instead to excel in love. Thus with these two wings raising thyself above the earth and above thyself, try to rid thyself of the inordinate disturbance of excessive fear, and leave thy cause with the Lord and make his cause thy own. Let fear be with thee

until thou art purified and cleansed of thy sins and of thy ignorance, but also love the Lord in order that thou mayest be transformed in Him, and set Him as the Master and the Arbiter of thy actions without desiring to be above any person. Do not trust thy own judgment, and be not wise in thy own conceit (Prov. 3, 7), for the judgments of men are only too easily blinded by their passions, throwing them out of their course and drawing after them the will as their captive. Thus it comes, that men fear what is not to be feared, and rejoice in that which is not profitable. Take heed lest thou be dissipated by every slight interior consolation, but hesitate and restrain thyself until thou findest with tranquil solicitude the proper measure in all things. This happy medium thou wilt always find, if thou remain subject to thy superiors and willingly accept that, which the Most High works in thee and teaches thee. Although thy undertakings may be good as regards the intentions, they must nevertheless also conform to the requirements of obedience and of prudence, for without this guidance they are usually deformed and without any profitable result. Be thou therefore in all things solicitous about that, which is most holy and perfect.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE FELICITOUS BIRTH OF THE MOST HOLY MARY OUR MISTRESS: OF THE FAVORS, WHICH SHE THEN RECEIVED FROM THE HAND OF THE MOST HIGH, AND HOW A NAME WAS GIVEN HER IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.

326. The day destined for the parturition of saint Anne and for the birth of Her, who was consecrated and sanctified to be the Mother of God, had arrived: a day most fortunate for the world. This birth happened on the eighth day of September, fully nine months having elapsed since the Conception of the soul of our most holy Queen and Lady. Saint Anne was prepared by an interior voice of the Lord, informing Her, that the hour of her parturition had come. Full of the joy of the holy Spirit at this information, she prostrated herself before the Lord and besought the assistance of his grace and his protection for a happy deliverance. Presently she felt a movement in her womb similar to that which is proper to creatures being born to the light. The most blessed child Mary was at the same time by divine providence and power ravished into a most high ecstasy. Hence Mary was born into the world without perceiving it by her senses, for their operations and faculties were held in suspense. As She had the use of her reason, She would have perceived it by her senses, if they would have been left to operate in their natural manner at that time. However, the Almighty disposed otherwise, in order that

the Princess of heaven might be spared the sensible experience otherwise connected with birth.

327. She was born pure and stainless, beautiful and full of grace, thereby demonstrating, that She was free from the law and the tribute of sin. Although She was born substantially like other daughters of Adam, yet her birth was accompanied by such circumstances and conditions of grace, that it was the most wonderful and miraculous birth in all creation and will eternally redound to the praise of her Maker. At twelve o'clock in the night this divine Luminary issued forth, dividing the night of the ancient Law and its pristine darknesses from the new day of grace, which now was about to break into dawn. She was clothed, handled and dressed like other infants, though her soul dwelt in the Divinity; and She was treated as an infant, though She excelled all mortals and even all the angels in wisdom. Her mother did not allow Her to be touched by other hands than her own, but she herself wrapped Her in swaddling clothes: and in this Saint Anne was not hindered by her present state of childbirth; for she was free from the toils and labors, which other mothers usually endure in such circumstances.

328. So then saint Anne received in her arms Her, who was her Daughter, but at the same time the most exquisite Treasure of all the universe, inferior only to God and superior to all other creatures. With fervent tears of joy she offered this Treasure to his Majesty, saying interiorly: "Lord of infinite wisdom and power, Creator of all that exists, this Fruit of my womb, which I have received of thy bounty, I offer to Thee with eternal thanks, for without any merit of mine Thou hast vouchsafed it to me. Dispose Thou of the mother and Child according to thy most holy will and look pro-

pitiously down upon our lowliness from thy exalted throne. Be Thou eternally blessed, because Thou hast enriched the world with a Creature so pleasing to thy bounty and because in Her Thou hast prepared a dwelling-place and a tabernacle for the eternal Word (Sap. 9, 8). I tender my congratulations to my holy forefathers and to the holy Prophets, and in them to the whole human race, for this sure pledge of Redemption, which Thou hast given them. But how shall I be able worthily to treat Her, whom Thou hast given me as a Daughter? I that am not worthy to be her servant? How shall I handle the true ark of the Testament? Give me, O my Lord and King, the necessary enlightenment to know thy will and to execute it according to thy pleasure in the service of my Daughter."

329. The Lord answered the holy matron interiorly, that she was to treat her heavenly Child outwardly as mothers treat their daughters, without any demonstration of reverence; but to retain this reverence inwardly, fulfilling the laws of a true mother toward Her, and rearing Her up with all motherly love and solicitude. All this the happy mother complied with; making use of this permission and her mother's rights without losing her reverence, she regaled herself with her most holy Daughter, embracing and caressing Her in the same way as other mothers do with their daughters. But it was always done with a proper reverence and consciousness of the hidden and divine sacrament known only to the mother and Daughter. The guardian angels of the sweet Child with others in great multitudes showed their veneration and worship to Mary as She rested in the arms of her mother; they joined in heavenly music, some of which was audible also to blessed Anne. The thousand angels appointed as guardians of the great Queen offered them-

selves and dedicated themselves to her service. This was also the first time, in which the heavenly Mistress saw them in a corporeal form with their devises and habiliments, as I shall describe in another chapter (Ch. XXIII) and the Child asked them to join with Her in the praise of the Most High and to exalt Him in her name.

330. At the moment of the birth of our Princess Mary the Most High sent the archangel Gabriel as an envoy to bring this joyful news to the holy Fathers in limbo. Immediately the heavenly ambassador descended, illumining that deep cavern and rejoicing the just who were detained therein. He told them that already the dawn of eternal felicity had commenced and that the reparation of man, which was so earnestly desired and expected by the holy Patriarchs and foretold by the Prophets, had been begun, since She, who was to be the Mother of the Messias, had now been born; soon would they now see the salvation and the glory of the Most High. The holy prince gave them an understanding of the excellence of the most holy Mary and of what the Omnipotent had begun to work in Her, in order that they might better comprehend the happy beginning of the mystery, which was to end their prolonged imprisonment. Then all the holy Patriarchs and Prophets and the rest of the just in limbo rejoiced in spirit and in new canticles praised the Lord for this benefit.

331. All these happenings at the birth of our Queen succeeded each other in a short space of time. The first exercise of her senses in the light of the material sun, was to recognize her parents and other creatures. The arms of the Most High began to work new wonders in Her far above all conceptions of men, and the first and most stupendous one was to send innumerable angels to bring the Mother of the eternal Word body and soul into

the empyrean heaven for the fulfilling of his further intentions regarding Her. The holy princes obeyed the divine mandate and receiving the child Mary from the arms of her holy Mother Anne, they arranged a new and solemn procession bearing heavenward with incomparable songs of joy the true Ark of the covenant, in order that for a short time it might rest, not in the house of Obededon, but in the temple of the King of kings and of the Lord of lords, where later on it was to be placed for all eternity. This was the second step, which most holy Mary made in her life, namely, from this earth to the highest heaven.

332. Who can worthily extol this wonderful prodigy of the right hand of the Almighty? Who can describe the joy and the admiration of the celestial spirits, when they beheld this new and wonderful work of the Most High, and when they gathered to celebrate it in their songs? In these songs they acknowledged and reverenced as their Queen and Mistress, Her, who was to be the Mother of their Lord, and the source of the grace and glory, which they possessed; for it was through his foreseen merits, that they had been made the recipients of the divine bounty. But above all, what human tongue, or what mortal could ever describe or comprehend the heart-secrets of that tender Child during these events? I leave the imagination of all this to Catholic piety, and still more to those who in the Lord are favored with an understanding of it, but most of all to those who, by divine bounty shall have arrived at the beatific vision face to face.

333. Borne by the hands of the angels the child Mary entered the empyrean heaven where She prostrated Herself full of love before the royal throne in the presence of the Most High. Then (according to our way of

understanding), was verified what long before had happened in figure, when Bethsabee entered into the presence of her son Solomon, who, while presiding over his people of Israel, arose from his throne, received her with honor and reverence, and seated her at his side as queen. Similarly, but in a more glorious and admirable manner, the person of the divine Word now received the child Mary, whom He had chosen as Mother, as Queen of the universe. Although her real dignity and the purpose of these ineffable mysteries were unknown to Mary, yet her infant faculties were strengthened by divine power for the proper reception of these favors. New graces and gifts were bestowed upon Her, by which her faculties were correspondingly elevated. Her powers of mind, besides being illumined and prepared by new grace and light, were raised and proportioned to the divine manifestation, and the Divinity displayed Itself in the new light vouchsafed, revealing Itself to Her intuitively and clearly in a most exalted manner. This was the first time in which the most holy soul of Mary saw the blessed Trinity in unveiled beatific vision.

334. The sole witnesses of the glory of Mary in this beatific vision, of the sacraments then again revealed to Her, of the divine effect that overflowed into her most pure soul, was God the Author of this unheard of wonder, and the astounded angels, who in some measure perceived these mysteries in God Himself. The Queen seated at the side of the Lord, who was to be her Son, and seeing Him face to face, was more successful in her prayer than Bethsabee (III Kings, 2, 21). For She prayed, that He bestow the untouched Sunamite Abisag, his inaccessible Divinity, upon his sister, human nature; She prayed that his promised coming from heaven to the earth and his marriage with human nature by the hypo-

static union be fulfilled in the person of the Word. Many times had He pledged Himself to it among men through the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets and now Mary besought Him to accelerate the reparation of the human race, expected for so many ages amid the multiplied iniquity and the ruin of souls. The Most High heard this most pleasing petition of his Mother, and acting more graciously than Solomon of old toward his mother, He assured Her that soon his promises should be fulfilled, and that He should descend to the world in order to assume and redeem human nature.

335. In this divine consistory and tribunal of the most holy Trinity it was determined to give a name to the Child Queen. As there is no proper and legitimate name, except it be found in the immutable being of God himself (for from it are participated and determined according to their right weight and measure all things in infinite wisdom) his Majesty wished himself to give and impose that name in heaven. He thereby made known to the angelic spirits, that the three divine Persons, had decreed and formed the sweet names of Jesus and Mary for the Son and Mother from the beginning before the ages, and that they had been delighted with them and had engraved them on their eternal memories to be as it were the Objects for whose service They should create all things. Being informed of these and many other mysteries, the holy angels heard a voice from the throne speaking in the person of the Father: "Our chosen One shall be called MARY, and this name is to be powerful and magnificent. Those that shall invoke it with devout affection shall receive most abundant graces; those that shall honor it and pronounce it with reverence shall be consoled and vivified, and will find in it the remedy of their evils, the treasures for their enrichment, the light which shall guide

them to heaven. It shall be terrible against the power of hell, it shall crush the head of the serpent and it shall win glorious victories over the princes of hell." The Lord commanded the angelic spirits to announce this glorious name to saint Anne, so that what was decreed in heaven might be executed on earth. The heavenly Child, lovingly prostrate before the throne, rendered most acceptable and human thanks to the eternal Being; and She received the name with most admirable and sweet jubliation. If the prerogatives and graces, which She then was favored with, were to be described, it would necessitate an extra book of many volumes. The holy angels honored and acknowledged most holy Mary as the future Mother of the Word and as their Queen and Mistress enthroned at the right hand of her Son; they showed their veneration of her holy name, prostrating themselves as it proceeded from the throne in the voice of the eternal Father, especially those, who had it written on the devises over their breast. All of them gave forth canticles of praise for these great and hidden mysteries. In the meanwhile the infant Queen remained ignorant of the real cause of all that She thus experienced, for her dignity of Mother of the incarnate Word was not revealed to Her till the time of the Incarnation. With the same reverential jubilee did the angels return in order to replace Her into the arms of holy Anne, to whom this event remained a secret, as was also the absence of her Daughter; for a guardian angel, assuming an aerial body, supplied her place for this very purpose. More than that, during a great part of the time in which the heavenly Child remained in the empyrean heaven, her mother was wrapped in an ecstasy of highest contemplation, and in it, although she did not know what was happening to the Child, exalted mysteries concerning the dignity of Mother of God,

to which She was to be chosen, were revealed to her. The prudent matron kept them enshrined within her breast, conferring them in her thoughts with the duties she owed to her Child.

336. On the eighth day after the birth of the great Queen multitudes of most beautiful angels in splendid array descended from on high bearing an escutcheon on which the name of MARY was engraved and shone forth in great brilliancy. Appearing to the blessed mother Anne, they told her, that the name of her daughter was to be MARY, which name they had brought from heaven, and which divine Providence had selected and now ordained to be given to their child by Joachim and herself. The saint called for her husband and they conferred with each other about this disposition of God in regard to the name of their Daughter. The more than happy father accepted the name with joy and devout affection. They decided to call their relatives and a priest and then, with much solemnity and festivity, they imposed the name of MARY on their Child. The angels also celebrated this event with most sweet and ravishing music, which, however, was heard only by the mother and her most holy Daughter. Thus was the divine Princess named by the holy Trinity: in heaven, on the day of her nativity, and on earth, after eight days. This name was written in the list of other names, when her mother presented herself at the temple according to the law, as I will relate further on. This was the birth, like to which none had been before, and the like of which cannot again happen in mere creatures. This was the most blessed birth of which nature was capable, for by it an Infant came into existence, whose entrance into the world was not only free from all impurities of sin, but who was more pure and holy than the highest sera-

phim. The birth of Moses was celebrated on account of the beauty and handsomeness of the infant (Exod. 2, 2); all his beauty was only corruptible and apparent. But O how beautiful is our great Child! O how beautiful (Cant. 7, 6)! She is entirely beautiful and most sweet in her delights, since She is possessed of all grace and beauty, without being wanting in any. The laughter and the joy of the house of Abraham was the birth of the promised Isaac (Genes. 21, 6), conceived in a sterile womb, but this joy was great only because it foreshadowed and was derived from the birth of our infant Queen, toward which all this joy of Abraham was only a step. If that birth was so admirable and full of joy for the family of the Patriarch because it was a foreshadowing of the birth of sweetest Mary, heaven and earth should rejoice at the birth of Her, who gave a beginning to the restoration of heaven and the sanctification of the world. When Noah was born, his father Lamech was consoled (Genes. 5, 29), because in that son God had provided a progenitor of the human race in the ark and assured a restoration of the blessings, which the sins of men had forfeited. But all this happened merely as a type to foreshadow the birth of this Child, who was to be the true Reparatrix, being the mystical ark which contained the new and true Noah and which drew Him down from heaven, who was to fill with benediction all the inhabitants of the earth. O blessed birth! O joyful nativity! The most pleasing to the blessed Trinity in all the ages of the past, the joy of the angels, the relief of sinners, the delight of the just, and the singular consolation of all the holy souls in limbo!

337. O precious and rich Pearl, that didst come forth to the light of the sun, still enclosed within the rough shell of this world! O sublime Infant, who, though

scarcely noticed by terrestrial eyes in the material light, yet in the eyes of the highest King and his courtiers, excellest all that is not God in dignity and grandeur! All generations bless Thee, all the nations recognize and praise thy grace and beauty! Let the earth be made illustrious by thy birth, let mortals be rejoiced because their Mediatrix is born, who will fill up the vast emptiness of original sin. Let thy gracious condescension toward me be blessed and extolled, who am the most abject dust and ashes. If Thou givest me permission, O my Lady, to speak in thy presence, I will propose a doubt which occurred to me in describing the mystery of thy most admirable and holy birth, namely: regarding an act of the Almighty at the hour of thy coming forth into the material light of the sun.

338. And this is the doubt: How are we to understand thy being raised in thy body by the hands of the holy angels into the empyrean heavens and to the vision of God? For according to the teaching of the holy Church and her doctors, heaven was closed and as it were interdicted to man, until thy most holy Son should open it through his life and death, and until He himself, as Redeemer and Chief, should enter it on the day of his admirable Ascension, He being the first one for whom these eternal portals were to be opened after their being closed up by sin?

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

339. My dearest daughter, it is true, that divine justice closed heaven against mortals on account of the first sin, until my most holy Son should open it by satisfying most abundantly for men through his earthly life and death. It was befitting and just, that this same Redeemer, who had united to Himself the redeemed mem-

bers and opened heaven, should as their Chief enter before any of the children of Adam. If Adam had not sinned, it would not have been necessary to follow this course; for men would have ascended of themselves in order to enjoy the Divinity in the empyrean heavens; having however foreseen the fall of man, the most blessed Trinity provided for the course followed at present. This great mystery was referred to by David in the twenty-third psalm, when speaking of the spirits of heaven he repeats twice "Lift up, ye princes, your gates; and be ye lifted up, ye eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." They are here called the gates of the angels, because only for them were they open, but for mortal men they were closed. Although these heavenly courtiers were aware of the fact that the incarnate Word had already thrown back the bars and bolts of guilt, and that He was now ascending rich and glorious with the spoils of death and sin, bringing with Him the fruits of his Passion in the accompanying hosts of the glorious saints released from limbo; nevertheless the holy angels give vent to their admiration and breathless suspense at this wonderful novelty, asking: "Who is this King of glory?" For He was a man and of the same nature as the one who had lost for himself and for all his race the right to enter into heaven.

340. They themselves give answer to the question saying: "The Lord who is strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle," the Lord of virtues, the King of glory. This was as if they confessed their conviction, that this Man, who was now coming up from the world in order to open the eternal gates, was not a mere man and is not included under the law of sin; but that He was true God and true man, who, strong and powerful in battle, had overcome the strong-armed one (Luc. 11, 22), that

reigned in the world, had taken away his reign and despoiled him of his weapons. And He was the Lord of virtues, as one that had exercised them as a Master, with sovereignty over them, and without any contradiction of sin and defect. As the Lord of virtues and as the Lord of glory, He now came in triumph, distributing virtues and glory to his redeemed, for whom as man He had suffered and died, and whom as God He was now raising up to the eternal and beatific vision, having broken the bars and shackles imposed by sin.

341. Since this, O soul, was the work of my dear Son, the true God and man, He, as the Lord of virtues and graces, exalted and adorned me with them from the first moment of my Immaculate Conception. And as, moreover, the hindrance of sin touched me not, I was free from the impediments which prevented other mortals from entering into the eternal gates of heaven; on the contrary the powerful arm of my Son acted with me as being the Mistress of all virtues and as the Queen of heaven. Because He was to vest Himself and assume unto Himself human nature from my flesh and blood, He was beforehand in preparing me and making me like Himself in purity and exemption from fault and in other divine gifts and privileges. As I was not a slave of sin, I exercised the virtues not as a subject, but as a Mistress, without contradiction, but with sovereignty, not like the children of Adam, but like the Son of God, who was also my Son.

342. For these reasons the celestial spirits, who had possession of the eternal gates as their own, opened them up for me, perceiving that the Lord had created me more pure than all the most exalted spirits in heaven, and made me their Queen, and the Mistress of all creation. Remember also, my dearest, that he who makes the law

can also dispense with it freely, and this the supreme Lord and Legislator did with me, extending the sceptre of his clemency toward me more readily than Assuerus did to Esther. For the common laws regarding others and consequent on their guilt, applied not to me, who was to be the Mother of the Author of Grace. Although I could not, as a mere creature, merit such blessed privileges, yet the divine clemency and goodness of God turned toward me with full liberality and He was pleased with the humility of his servant, in order that for all eternity the Author of such prodigies might be praised. Do thou also, my Daughter, according to my directions, bless and magnify Him for these benefits bestowed upon me.

343. My admonition to thee, whom in spite of thy weakness and poverty I have chosen with such generous kindness as my disciple and companion, is this: that thou strive with all thy powers to imitate me in an exercise, in which I persevered during my whole life from the very first moment of my birth, omitting it on not a single day, however full of cares and labors it might have been. This exercise was the following: every day at beginning of dawn, I prostrated myself in the presence of the Most High and gave Him thanks and praise for his immutable Being, his infinite perfections, and for having created me out of nothing; acknowledging myself as his creature and the work of his hands, I blessed Him and adored Him, giving Him honor, magnificence and Divinity, as the supreme Lord and Creator of myself and of all that exists. I raised up my spirit to place it into his hands, offering myself with profound humility and resignation to Him and asking Him to dispose of me according to his will during that day and during all the days of my life, and to teach me to fulfill whatever would be to his

greater pleasure. This I repeated many times during the external works of the day, and in the internal ones I first consulted his Majesty, asking his advice, permission and benediction for all my actions.

344. Be very devout toward my most sweet name. I wish that thou be convinced of the great prerogatives and privileges, which the Almighty concedes to it, so that I myself, when I saw them in the Divinity, felt most deeply obliged and solicitous to make a proper return; and whenever the name MARY occurred to my mind (which happened often) and whenever I heard myself called by that name, I was aroused to thankfulness and urged to new fervor in the service of the Lord, who gave it to me. Thou hast the same name and I wish, that in proportion it should cause the same effects in thee and that thou imitate me faithfully by following the lesson given thee in this chapter, without failing in the least point from this day onward. And if in thy weakness thou shouldst fail, rouse thyself immediately, and in the presence of thy Lord and mine, acknowledge thy fault, confessing it in sorrow. Repeating these holy exercises over and again with solicitous care, thou shalt find forgiveness for imperfections and grow accustomed to strive after what is highest in all virtues and most pleasing to the Lord. Then, following the light which He gives and in pursuance of that which is most pleasing and agreeable to thy own tastes and mine, thou shalt not be denied the grace of employing thyself entirely in listening, attending to and obeying in all things thy Spouse and Lord, who seeks in thee only what is most pure, most holy and perfect, and a will prompt and eager to put the same into practice.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW SAINT ANNE COMPLIED WITH THE LAW OF MOSES IN REGARD TO CHILDBIRTH; AND HOW MOST HOLY MARY ACTED IN HER INFANCY.

345. It was a precept of the law, given in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus, that a woman who had given birth to a daughter should be deemed impure for two weeks and should remain in the state of purification for sixty-six days after the birth, just double the time required for purification in case of a man-child Having completed the days of her purification she was to present herself in order to offer a lamb one year old as a holocaust for the daughter or the son, and also a young pigeon or turtle-dove as atonement for the sin. This she was to do at the door of the tabernacle, beseeching the priest to offer them to the Lord and to pray for her; thereupon she was accounted pure. The parturition of the most happy Anne was pure and undefiled, as befitting her heavenly Daughter, in whose purity the mother was a sharer. Although on this account there was no need of a special purification, she nevertheless complied with the obligation of the law to the very last point. Though not subject to its penalties, she considered herself bound in the eyes of men.

346. Sixty days of the purification having passed, saint Anne departed for the temple, her mind inflamed with divine ardor and bearing in her arms her blessed Daughter and Child. With the offerings prescribed by law and accompanied by innumerable angels, she betook herself

to the gate of the temple and spoke with the high priest, who was none other than Simeon. He was accustomed to spend much time in the temple and enjoyed the privilege and favor of seeing the child Mary, not only when She was offered and presented to the Lord in the temple, but on other occasions. Although this holy priest was not on each of these occasions fully aware of the dignity of our heavenly Mistress, as I will say farther on (No. 423, 710, 742), yet he always experienced great promptings and impulses of the spirit regarding the greatness of this Child in the sight of God.

347. Saint Anne offered to him the lamb and the turtle-dove with the rest of the gifts, and with tears of humility she asked him to pray for herself and the Child, her Daughter, that the Lord forgive them any fault of which perhaps they might be guilty. His Majesty certainly had nothing to forgive in a Daughter and mother, who were so full of grace; but He found Himself bound to reward the humility, with which notwithstanding their holiness they presented themselves as sinners. The holy priest received the oblation and in his spirit he was inflamed and moved to extraordinary joy. Careful not to manifest anything exteriorly and communing with himself, he said: "What strange feeling is this within me? Are these women perhaps the parents of the Messias, who is to come?" Moved by this joyful suspense he showed them great benevolence. The blessed mother Anne entered the temple, bearing her most holy Daughter on her arms, and She offered Her to the Lord with most devout and tender tears. For she alone in all the world knew what Treasure was given into her charge.

348. Saint Anne renewed the vow, which she had already made, to offer her Firstborn to the temple on arriving at the proper age. In renewing this offer she

was enlightened by new graces and promptings of the Most High, and in her heart she heard a secret voice urging her to fulfill this vow and offer her Child to the temple within three years. It was as it were the echo of the voice of the most holy Queen, who in her prayer touched the heart of God, in order that it might resound in the bosom of the mother. For when both entered the temple, the sweet Child seeing with her bodily eyes its grandeur and magnificence, dedicated to the worship and adoration of the Divinity, experienced wonderful effects of the Spirit and wished to prostrate Herself in the temple, to kiss its floor, and adore the Lord. But as She could not execute these desires in external actions, She supplied the defect with interior fervor, and She adored and blessed the Lord with a love more ardent, and a humility more profound than ever before or ever after was possible to be rendered by any creature. Addressing the Lord in her heart, She offered the following prayer:

349. "Most high and incomprehensible God, my King and my Lord, worthy of all glory and reverence, I, abject dust, but also a creature of thine, adore Thee in this thy holy place and temple. I magnify and exalt Thee on account of thy infinite Being and perfections, and I give thanks in as far as my insignificance is worthy of thy regard. For Thou hast vouchsafed to permit my eyes to see this holy temple and house of prayer, where thy holy Prophets and my forefathers have worshipped and blessed Thee, and where thy generous mercy has wrought so many wonders and mysteries in their behalf. Accept me, O Lord, in order that I may serve Thee in this holy house according to thy blessed will."

350. Thus She who was the Queen of heaven and of the universe, offered Herself as if She were the lowest slave of the Lord. As a testimony of its acceptation by

the Most High, a most resplendent light shone down from heaven, enveloping the mother and Child, and filling them with new splendors of grace. Again saint Anne was made aware that she would be expected to devote her Daughter to the temple within three years; she was given to understand that the delight with which God looked forward to such an offer, and the love with which the heavenly Child desired its consummation would not permit a longer delay. The holy angels of her guard and innumerable others who were present on this occasion sang sweetest songs of praise to the Author of these wonders; but they did not therefore have a more perfect knowledge of these happenings than saint Anne or her most holy Daughter, who perceived interiorly what was spiritual, and felt exteriorly what was subject to the senses in these things. Saint Simeon saw dimly the sensible light. Thereupon saint Anne, rich in her Treasure and endowed with new gifts of the most high God, returned to her home.

351. The ancient serpent eagerly observed all these events. Yet the Lord concealed from him what he was not to know, and permitted him to obtain knowledge only of what was necessary for his own undoing in his desire of destroying others and only so much as might serve to make him an instrument in the execution of the secret judgments of the Most High. This enemy was full of conjectures in regard to the unheard of things, which had come to pass in connection with this Mother and Child. But when he saw that they brought offerings to the temple and that they, like sinners, observed the prescriptions of the law, even begging of the priest to intercede for their forgiveness; he was deceived and assuaged in his fury, believing that this mother and her Daughter were of ordinary condition although they might be more perfect and holy than other women.

352. The sovereign Child was treated like other children of her age. Her nourishment was of the usual kind, though less in quantity; and so was her sleep, although her parents were solicitous that She take more sleep. She was not troublesome, nor did She ever cry for mere annoyance, as is done by other children, but She was most amiable and caused no trouble to anybody. That She did not act in this regard as other children caused no wonder; for She often wept and sighed (as far as her age and her dignity of Queen and Mistress would permit) for the sins of the world and for its Redemption through the coming of the Savior. Ordinarily She maintained, even in her infancy, a pleasant countenance, yet mixed with gravity and a peculiar Majesty, never showing any childishness. She sometimes permitted Herself to be caressed, though, by a secret influence and a certain outward austerity, She knew how to repress the imperfections connected with such endearments. Her prudent mother Anne treated her Child with incomparable solicitude and caressing tenderness; also her father Joachim loved Her as a father and as a saint, although he was ignorant of the mystery at that time. The Child on its part showed a special love toward him, as one whom She knew for her father and one much beloved of God. Although She permitted more tender caresses from her father than from others, yet God inspired the father as well as all others, with such an extraordinary reverence and modesty towards Her whom He had chosen for his Mother, that even his pure and fatherly affection was outwardly manifested only with the greatest moderation and reserve.

353. In all things the infant Queen was most gracious, perfect and admirable. Though She passed her infancy subject to the common laws of nature, yet this did not

hinder the influx of grace. During her sleep her interior acts of love, and all other exercises of her faculties which were not dependent on the exterior senses, were never interrupted. This special privilege is possible also in other creatures, if the divine power confers it on them; but it is certain that in regard to Her whom He had chosen as his Mother and the Queen of all creation, He extended this special favor beyond all previous or subsequent measure in other creatures and beyond the conception of any created mind. God spoke to Samuel and to other saints and Prophets in their sleep, (I Reg. 3, 4) and to many He sent mysterious dreams or visions (Genes. 37; 5, 9) for to his Omnipotence it is easy to enlighten the mind during the inactivity of the senses in natural sleep or during their ravishment in ecstasy; they cease to act in the one as well as in the other, and without their activity the soul hears, accepts and transacts the things of the Spirit. This was the rule which the Queen followed from the moment of her Conception till now and for all eternity; for the activity of grace in Her during Her pilgrimage through life was not intermittent, like in other creatures. When She was alone, or when She was laid to sleep, which was in Her most moderate, She was engaged in the contemplation of the mysteries and the excellencies of the Most High, and in the enjoyment of the divine visions and the conversation of his Majesty. Her intercourse with the angels was likewise very frequent and in the following chapter something will be said of the manner of their manifestation and of some of their eminent perfections.

354. My Queen and heavenly Lady, if without being offended, Thou wilt, as a kind Mother, listen to my ignorant talk, I will ask of thy kindness the solution of some doubts which have occurred to me in this chapter.

If my ignorance and boldness should transgress the limits, instead of answering me, my Mistress, correct me with maternal mercy. My doubt is: Whether in this thy infancy Thou didst feel the necessities and hunger which according to the natural order, children do feel? And if Thou didst feel them, how didst Thou suffer these annoying inconveniences? And how didst Thou ask for the nourishment and the other help necessary, since Thou wast so wonderfully patient that Thou wouldst not make use of tears, which serve other infants as speech and words? I am also ignorant, whether the hardships of that age were not most irksome to thy Majesty, such as to have thy virginal body clothed and unclothed as infants are, to be fed with the food of other children, and to undergo the other experiences of that age? For other children undergo them bereft of reason, while nothing was concealed from Thee, O Lady. When I look upon Thee as a child in age and yet as grown up in thy capacity of judging of things, it seems to me almost impossible that there should have been no inconveniences in this matter, in the time or the measure, or in other circumstances regarding the treatment allotted to Thee during thy infant life. Thy celestial prudence taught Thee to preserve dignity and composure, yet Thou didst not intimate the wants and needs of thy age and condition either by crying, as an infant, or by word of mouth, as one grown up. Thus they could not know thy needs and could not treat Thee as one endowed with reason; for even thy mother could not know all these things, nor could she provide for all that was necessary, since she knew not the time nor the manner of serving thy Majesty in all things. All these considerations excite my admiration and arouse in me the desire of knowing the mysteries thus concealed.

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

355. My daughter, since thou art full of wonder, I will inform thee in all kindness. It is true that I was in possession of grace and of the use of reason from the first instant of my Conception, as I have so often shown thee; I underwent the hardships of infancy as other children and I was reared and treated as others of the same condition. I felt hunger, thirst, sleepiness and other infirmities of the body, and as a daughter of Adam I was subject to these accidental necessities; for it was just that I should imitate my most holy Son, who subjected Himself to these hardships and defects, in order that He might merit so much the more and in order that He might be an example to the rest of mortals for their imitation. As I was governed by divine grace, I made use of eating and sleep in moderation, allowing myself less than others, and only so much as was proper for the augmentation and the preservation of my life and health. Disorder in these things is not only against virtue, but against the well-being of nature itself, which is invaded and ravaged by it. On account of my exquisite composition I was affected by hunger and thirst more painfully than other children; and the want of nourishment was more dangerous to me; but if it was given to me at unseasonable times, or in excess, I bore it with patience, until by some befitting sign I could manifest my needs. I felt less the want of sleep on account of the opportunity which it furnished me for the presence and the heavenly conversation of the angels.

356. That I was bound and wrapped in clothes was not painful to me, but it was a cause of much joy, for I understood by divine light, that the incarnate Lord was to suffer a most cruel death and was to be bound most shamefully. Whenever I was alone during my childhood

I placed myself in the form of a cross, praying in imitation of Him; for I knew that my Beloved was to die in that position, although I did not know then that the Crucified was to be my Son. In all the difficulties, which I underwent after I was born into the world, I was resigned and contented, for I never lost sight of one consideration, which I desire thee always to keep in mind. It is this: that thou ponder in thy heart and in thy soul the truths, which I saw, so that thou mayest form a correct judgment of all things, giving to each that esteem and value which is its due. In regard to this the children of Adam are ordinarily full of error and blindness, but I desire that thou, my daughter, share it not with them.

357. As soon as I was born into the world and made aware of the light, which shone upon me, I felt the effects of the elements, the influence of the planets and of the stars, of the earth which sustained me, of the nourishments which preserved me, and of all the other things of this life. I gave thanks to the Author of all things, acknowledging his works as benefits freely bestowed upon me, and not as dues, which He owed to me. Therefore, when anything was wanting of the necessaries of life I remained in peace and contentedness and deemed it all perfectly reasonable and proper in my regard, since I had merited none of the gifts and could justly be deprived of all of them. Hence, if I acknowledged this, thereby merely asserting a truth which the human reason cannot ignore nor deny, where have mortals their intellect, or what use do they make of their understanding when, at the refusal of things which they desire and of which perhaps they do not even profit, they begin to get sad and lash themselves into fury one against the other, and even against their God, as if they were suffering some injury at his hands? Let them inquire what treasures and

riches they did possess before they came into life? What services had they rendered unto God in order to merit them? And if out of nothing there cannot arise anything, and if they could not merit the being which they have received, what obligation is there on the part of God to preserve out of justice, what was given to them entirely gratuitously? That God created man was of no benefit to Himself; but to man it was a benefit, and one as great as the being given to him, and as high as the object for which it was given. And if in his creation man becomes indebted so much that he never can pay his debt, tell me what right can he invoke at present for his preservation? Has he not received his being without merit and many times forfeited it? How can he claim the guarantee and pledge of unfailing plenty?

358. If the first transaction and operation was a mortgage and a debt by which man binds himself, how can he with such impatience demand favors? And if in spite of all this, the supreme goodness of the Creator furnishes him graciously with what is necessary, why should he be agitated by the want of superfluities? O my daughter, what an execrable disorder and what a despicable blindness of mortals is this? For that, which the Lord gives them gratuitously, they do not thank Him, or even give Him acknowledgment, and for that which He denies them justly and sometimes most mercifully, they are restless and proudly desirous, and they try to procure it by unjust and forbidden means, throwing themselves into the very destruction which flies from them. The first sin alone, committed by man, was sufficient to cancel man's right to the friendly service of all the other creatures; and if the Lord himself would not restrain them, they would turn in vengeance upon man and refuse to render any service or help for sustaining his life. The heavens

would deny them their light and benign influences, the fire would refuse its heat, the air would cease to serve for respiration, and all the other things would in their particular way refuse their services, since they would in justice be bound to refuse them. Then when the earth would deny its fruits, and the elements their moderation and their assistance, and all the other creatures would arm themselves to avenge the wrongs of their Creator (Sap. 5, 18), perhaps disgraced man would humiliate himself in his vileness and would not heap up the wrath of the Lord for the unerring day of accountance, when all his dreadful guilt will be exposed.

359. But thou, my dear friend, fly from such base ingratitude, and humbly acknowledge that thou hast received thy being and life gratuitously, and that, gratuitously, its Author preserves it for thee. Freely dost thou receive all the other benefits, without any merit of thine; and thus, receiving much and repaying little, thou makest thyself daily less worthy of favors, while the liberality of the Most High grows continually with thy indebtedness. Let this thought be uppermost in thee always, in order that it awaken and move thee to many acts of virtue. If any of the irrational creatures fail thee, I desire thee to rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to his Majesty, and bless them for their obedience to the Creator. If the rational creatures persecute thee, love them with all thy heart and regard them as the instruments of divine justice, which afford thee some opportunity of rendering satisfaction for thy deficiency. Rather strengthen and console thyself in labors, adversities and tribulations, not only considering them as fully deserved by the faults committed, but deeming them ornaments of the soul and most rich jewels given thee by thy Spouse.

360. Let this be the answer to thy doubt: over and

above this I wish to give thee an instruction, which may be found in all the chapters. Consider, my soul the punctuality of my mother Anne in fulfilling the precept of the law of the Lord, to whose Majesty this solicitude was very pleasing. In this thou shouldst imitate her by observing inviolate each and every one of the precepts of thy rules and constitutions; for God will reward most liberally this fidelity and severely punish any negligence in this matter. Without sin I was conceived and it was not necessary to present me to the priest in order that the Lord might purify me; nor was this necessary for my mother, since she was very holy. Nevertheless we humbly obeyed the law and thereby we merited great increase of virtue and grace. Despising just and wise laws and frequently dispensing with them, destroys the worship and fear of God, and fatally confuses government among men. Beware of easily dispensing in the obligations of the religious state, either for thyself or for others. If infirmity or some other just cause make it advisable, let it be done with moderation and with the approbation of the confessor, thus justifying dispensation before God and before men by the approbation of holy obedience. If thou findest thyself weary or weakened, do not at once become remiss in the strict observance, for God will give thee strength according to thy faith in Him. Do not give any dispensation on pretext of being overworked. Make that which is less serve and advance that which is the greater, let the creatures serve the Creator. On account of thy position as superioress thou hast less excuse; for in the observation of the laws thou must give a good example, leading on the others. Therefore, for thyself, no merely human motive can serve as an excuse, though thou mayest sometimes excuse thy sisters and subjects on such account. Note moreover, my dear-

est, that I desire thee to lead in perfection; therefore this rigor is necessary, not even taking into consideration, that the observance of the precepts is a duty to God and men. Let no one think that it is enough to fulfill all obligations toward the Lord, and at the same time tread under foot the duty towards his neighbor, to whom is due good example and avoidance of all real scandal.—O Queen and Mistress of all creation, would that I could attain the purity and the virtue of the supernal spirits, in order that this inferior part of my being, which weighs down the soul (Sap. 9, 15), may prompt me to fulfill thy celestial teachings. I have become burdensome unto myself (Job 7, 20); but with thy intercession and the gracious favor of the Most High I will be able to obey thy will and his with a loving promptitude of heart. Let not thy intercession and support, and the guidance of thy holy and wise counsels ever fail me!

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE EMBLEMS OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS IN THEIR INTERCOURSE WITH THE BLESSED MARY, AND OF THEIR PERFECTIONS.

361. It has already been said that a thousand angels were appointed as guardians of Mary, just as there is one for each soul. On account of the great dignity of the most holy Mary we must assume, that each of the thousand guardian angels watched over Mary more solicitously than other guardian angels watch over other souls. Besides these thousand angels, who formed her ordinary and constant guard, many others were at her service on different occasions, especially after She had conceived in her womb the divine Word incarnate. I have mentioned above (No. 204) that the selection of these thousand angels was made after the creation of the angelic hosts, and after the justification of the good and fall of the bad. The Divinity of the Word, to be clothed in its human nature, and also his most pure Mother was proposed and manifested to them, while they were yet in the state of probation; they were then made to understand, that they were to revere Them as their superiors.

362. When the apostate angels were chastised and the faithful ones rewarded, the Lord proceeded according to a most just measure and equity. As I said: in the accidental reward there was a certain diversity among the angels according to the difference in their dispositions regarding the mysteries of the incarnate Word and his most pure Mother, which were made known to them be-

fore and during the probation. This accidental reward consisted especially in being selected to assist and serve the most holy Mary and the incarnate Word, and also in the manner and form of their visible appearance to the Queen and of serving Her. This is what I wish to explain in this chapter; but at the same time I must acknowledge my inability to do so, since it is difficult to reduce to material images and words the perfections and the operations of such exalted spiritual beings. Nevertheless if I should pass over this matter in silence, I would fail to give a proper idea of a great portion of the most exalted operations of the Queen of heaven during her mortal life. For next to her intercourse with the Lord, that with his ministers, the angelic spirits, was the most continual. Therefore without the mention of this intercourse the history of her life would be defective.

363. I presuppose all that I have until now said about the orders, hierarchies and distinctions of the thousand angels of her guard. But I wish here to describe in what corporeal forms they appeared to their Queen and Mistress. The intellectual and imaginary apparitions I reserve for another chapter, where I intend to describe especially the different kinds of visions, with which her Highness was favored. The nine hundred angels, which were chosen from the nine choirs, one hundred from each, were selected from the number of those, who had distinguished themselves by their esteem, love and reverence for the most holy Mary. They were made visible to the blessed Virgin under the form of young men in their early years, but of the most exquisite beauty and courteousness. Their bodily forms showed but little resemblance to earthly matter, for they were transparently pure and like animated crystals bathed in glory, similar to a glorified and transfigured body. With their

beauty they combined a grave and amiable composure. Their garments covered them in flowing folds, but were resplendent, like the most clear burnished gold, enameled or stained with exquisite shades of color, presenting a most wonderful and varied beauty to the sight. At the same time all this ornament and visible presence seemed of such a kind, that it could not be subject to the sense of feeling nor be touched by the hand, although it could be seen and perceived like the rays of the sun entering into the open window and revealing the atoms of dust in the air. But the splendor of the angels was incomparably more beautiful and pleasing than any light of the sun.

364. In addition, all these angels were crowned with wreaths woven of the most tender and exquisite flowers, that sent forth the sweetest fragrance, not of this earth but altogether spiritual and heavenly. In their hands they held palms of wonderful beauty and variety, which were to signify the virtues, which most holy Mary was to exercise, and the victories, which She was to gain by her sanctity and glory. All this they as it were offered Her beforehand, with great joy and jubilation. On their breasts they bore certain devices or emblems, such as we are accustomed to see exhibited in the uniforms or habits of the military orders. They contained letters, which stood for: "Mary, Mother of God," and which contributed much toward the splendor of their adornment and beauty. Their significance, however, was not made known to Mary until the moment of the incarnation of the Word.

365. This emblem or device was most wonderful to behold, on account of the great splendor, with which it showed forth her name above all the other beauty of the angelic ornaments. Its aspects and brilliancies were

changeable, in order to indicate the variety of the mysteries and excellences enclosed within that City of God. It contained the most exalted name and title, and intimated the highest dignity, which ever can fall to the lot of a mere creature: that of Mother of God. In this title the angels honored in the highest degree their and our Queen. They themselves were honored in that title, since it was the outward sign of their allegiance to Her and of their preferment consequent upon their devotion and veneration for Her who deserved the veneration of all creatures. A thousand times blessed were they, to merit the especial love of Mary and of her most holy Son.

366. The effects of this intercourse with the holy princes, and of their outward beauty in Mary, our Mistress, no one besides Herself could ever properly describe. They manifested to Her in a mysterious manner the greatness of the attributes of God, the blessings, which He showered upon Her in creating Her and choosing Her, in enriching Her and endowing Her with such great gifts of grace and treasures of the divine right hand, moving Her and inciting Her to such ecstasies of love and praise. All these gifts increased with her age and with the events of her life and, as the great work of the Incarnation drew near, they expanded more and more; for then was gradually revealed to Her the meaning of the emblem, which these angels bore across their breasts, which until then had been concealed from Her. It would be impossible to describe, what ardors of love, what profound humility, what tender affections filled the pure heart of Mary, when this was revealed to Her and when it dawned upon Her, what dignity and what obligation toward God this most peerless title involved. For She held Herself entirely incapable and unworthy of such an ineffable and mysterious dignity as that of Mother of God.

367. The seventy seraphim, who assisted the Queen were of the number of those nearest to the throne of God, who had most signally distinguished themselves in their devotion and admiration toward the hypostatic union of the divine and human nature in the person of the divine Word. For as they were most closely bound to God by their greater knowledge and love, they also desired more earnestly, that this mystery should be consummated in the womb of a woman. Their reward of essential and accidental glory corresponded to their particular and signal love. This latter, the accidental glory, which I have mentioned, consisted in their being privileged specially to attend upon most holy Mary and take a part in the mysteries consummated in Her.

368. Whenever these seventy seraphim showed themselves to Her in a visible manner, the Queen saw them in the same form in which Isaias saw them in imagination, that is with six wings. With two they covered the head, wishing to signify by this humble gesture the insufficiency of their intellect for the comprehension of the sacramental mystery at which they were assisting, and also their belief and acknowledgment of these mysteries, which they confessed, prostrate before the majesty and grandeur of the Creator. Thereby they also wished to extol with eternal praise the incomprehensible and sacred judgments of the Most High. With the other wings they covered the feet, which are the inferior extremities in closest contact with the earth, referring thereby to the Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth as being human and earthly in nature and acknowledging Her as the Creature excelling all others in dignity and grandeur above all understanding and calculation of the created mind; moreover they thereby wished to show, that though exalted as seraphim, they could not keep pace with the dignity and excellence of Mary.

369. With the wings of their breast they beat the air or seemed to fly, thereby intimating two things: on the one hand, by their incessant motion and flight, the love, the praise and reverence, which they gave to God; on the other, in disclosing their breasts, they wished to serve as it were to the most holy Mary as a most pure mirror of the Divinity, reflecting its essence and operations to Her during the time of her earthly pilgrimage; for it was not possible nor proper, that the Divinity should be manifest to her in open vision during all that time. The blessed Trinity wished, that their Daughter and Spouse should, in these seraphim, the creatures closest to the Divinity and encircling the throne, see most faithfully presented in living images, what She could not continually see in its own essence and in the original.

370. By this means the heavenly Spouse enjoyed the portrait of her Beloved even in the banishment of her pilgrimage, being thus inflamed body and soul with his love by his vision and intercourse through these exalted and love-consumed princes. The manner of this intercourse, over and above that which was sensible in it, was the same as that which they maintained among themselves, namely, that those of a higher order enlighten those of a lower, as I have said elsewhere (No. 202). For although the Queen of heaven was higher and greater in dignity and merit, yet, as David intimated (Ps. 8, 6), on account of her human nature, She was lower than the angels. The ordinary manner of divine influence and enlightenment adapts itself to the conditions of nature and not of grace.

371. The other twelve angels are the guardian angels of the twelve gates, of which St. John speaks in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse (Apoc. 21, 12) as explained above. They distinguished themselves by the lov-

ing praise, with which they celebrated the goodness of God in becoming man to teach and converse with men, and next to their joy at the Redemption of men and their readmission into the gates of heaven by his merits, was their loving wonder at the important part, which most holy Mary performed in this mystery of the Redemption. They were especially attentive to these great and wonderful works, by which God was to open up heaven, in order that men might enter into eternal life, and this latter is signified by these twelve gates of the tribes of Israel. The reward of their signal devotion was, that God appointed them as witnesses and, as it were, secretaries of the mysteries of the Redemption and that they were privileged to coöperate with the Queen of heaven as Mother of mercy and Mediatrix of those, who turn to Her for their salvation. Therefore I said above (No. 273) that her Majesty, the Queen, makes use especially of these twelve angels to assist, enlighten and defend her clients in their necessities and particularly in order to draw them from sin, whenever they invoke them and the most holy Mary.

372. These twelve angels appeared in the same corporeal shape as those which I have first mentioned except that they bore palms and crowns, reserved for the devout servants of the Mistress. Their service consisted especially in bringing to her mind the ineffable kindness of the Lord toward the human race, and in inciting Her to praise Him and petition Him for the fulfillment of his mercy. She sent them as messengers of her prayers to the throne of the eternal Father. They were sent also to those of her clients, who invoked Her or whom She wished to help and benefit, in order to enlighten them and assist them, as happened many times to the holy Apostles; for often did She aid them by the ministry of angels in their

labors for the primitive Church. Even now in our days these twelve angels are engaged in the same ministry, helping the devout servants of their and our Queen.

373. The eighteen angels, which completed the number of a thousand were those who signalized themselves in their compassion for the sufferings of the incarnate Word. Their reward for this compassion was great. They appeared to most holy Mary in wonderful beauty, bearing many emblems of the Passion and of other mysteries of the Redemption, especially two crosses of the most refulgent splendor and beauty, one on their breast and one on their arms. The sight of this wonderful display excited great admiration in the Queen, a most tender and compassionate love toward the sufferings of the Redeemer of the world, and most fervent thanks and acknowledgment of the benefits, which men were to receive in their Redemption and rescue from captivity. The great Princess very often sent these angels to her divine Son with diverse messages and petitions on behalf of souls.

374. In describing the forms and the ornaments of these angels I have at the same time mentioned some of their perfections and operations, although necessarily in a limited way, if compared to the reality. For they are invisible rays of the Divinity, most alert in their movements and operations, most powerful in strength, most penetrating in their understanding, incapable of mistake, unchangeable in their condition and in their purpose, never forgetting or losing sight of that which once they have undertaken. They are full of grace and glory without any fear of ever losing them. As they are without a body and invisible, therefore whenever God wishes to grant to man the favor of being able to see them, they assume an aerial and apparent body, one that is adapted

to the senses and to the object intended. All these angels of the Queen Mary were selected from the most distinguished of their respective orders and choirs, their superiority consisting principally in that of grace and glory. They guarded their Lady without neglecting the least point of their service during her holy life, and even now in heaven they derive an especial accidental enjoyment from her presence and company. Although ordinarily only some of them are sent to execute the special mandates of her will, yet all of them together are at times engaged in her service, fulfilling the decrees of the Divinity in her regard.

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

375. My daughter, on three different points, I wish to instruct thee in this chapter. The first is that thou, by incessant praise and acknowledgment, show thyself thankful for the favor which God vouchsafed thee in appointing angels to assist thee, teach thee, and guide thee through the tribulations and sorrows. Mortals, in their abominable ingratitude and grossness, ordinarily forget this blessing. They do not consider, what great mercy and condescension of the Most High it is to have ordained these holy princes as helpers, guardians and defenders of men, their earthly fellow creatures so full of miseries and sins. In forgetting how exalted in glory, dignity and beauty these spirits are, many men deprive themselves of numerous blessings, which they would otherwise obtain at the hands of these angels. Greatly do they rouse the indignation of the Lord on this account. Thou, however, my dearest, acknowledge these blessings and give Him thanks with all thy heart.

376. The second point is, that thou, in every place and at all times, preserve love and reverence toward these

holy spirits, as if thou didst see them with thy corporal eyes, and that thou dare not do before them what thou wouldst not do in public. Cease not to exert thyself in the service of God, even as they do and as they require of thee. Remember that they continually see the face of God (Matth. 18, 10) being of the blessed. Since they at the same time see thee, let there be nothing indecent in thee. Show thyself grateful to them for their vigilance, defense and protection.

377. Let the third point be, that thou live attentive to the calls, urgings and aspirations, by which these angels seek to rouse thee, move and excite thee to the recollection of the Most High and to the exercise of all the virtues. Be mindful how often they have responded to thy calls, how often they have placed themselves in the way of thy seeking, how often they have solicited for thee signs of the love of the Spouse, kindly reprehending thee for thy carelessness and remissness. When thou didst lose in thy troubles and weariness the guiding star of his light, they renewed hope in thy breast, and patiently corrected thee, directing thy footsteps again into the narrow path of the justifications and testimonies of the Lord. Do not forget, my soul, the greatness of the benefits bestowed upon thee in these angels, for they are above those of many nations and generations: strive to be grateful to thy Lord and to the angels, his ministers.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE HOLY EXERCISES AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE QUEEN IN THE FIRST YEAR AND A HALF OF HER INFANCY.

378. The enforced silence of other children in their first years, and the slow evolution of their intellect and of their power of speech arising from natural weakness, was heroic virtue in the infant Queen. For if speech is the product of the intellect and as it were the result of its activity, and if She was in perfect possession of all her faculties since her Conception, then the fact of her not speaking as soon as She was born, did not arise from the want of ability, but because She did not wish to make use of her power. Other children are not furnished with the natural forces, which are required to open their mouth and move their tender tongue as required for speech, but in the child Mary there was no such defect; for as far as her natural powers were concerned She was stronger than other children, and as She exercised sovereignty and dominion over all creation, She certainly could exercise it in regard to her own powers and faculties, if She had chosen to do so. Her not speaking therefore was virtue and great perfection, which opportunely concealed her science and grace, and evaded the astonishment naturally caused by one speaking in infancy. Besides, if it is wonderful that one should speak, who according to the natural course ought to be incapable of speech, I do not know, whether it is not more wonderful,

that one, who is able to speak from her birth should be silent for one year and a half.

379. It was ordained therefore by the Most High, that the sovereign Child should voluntarily keep this silence during the time in which ordinarily other children are unable to speak. The only exception made was in regard to the conversation held with the angels of her guard, or when She addressed Herself in vocal prayer to the Lord. For in regard to intercourse with God, the Author of speech, and with the holy angels, his messengers, when they treated in a visible manner with Her, this reason for maintaining silence did not hold good: on the contrary it was befitting, that, since there was no impediment, She should pray with her lips and her tongue; for it would not be proper to keep them unemployed for so long a time. But her mother never heard Her, nor did she know of her being able to speak during that period; and from this it can be better seen, what perfection it required in Her to pass that year and a half of her infancy in total silence. But during that time, whenever her mother freed her arms and hands, the child Mary immediately grasped the hands of her parents and kissed them with great submission and reverent humility, and in this practice She continued as long as her parents lived. She also sought to make them understand during that period of her age, that She desired their blessing, speaking more by the affection of her heart than by word of mouth. So great was her reverence for them, that never did She fail in the least point concerning the honor and obedience due to them. Nor did She cause them any trouble or annoyance, since She knew beforehand all their thoughts and was anxious to fulfill them before they were made manifest.

380. In all her actions and movements She was gov-

erned by the Holy Ghost, being perfect in all her actions; yet her most ardent love was never satisfied, but She unceasingly renewed her fervent aspirations to emulate still greater gifts (I Cor. 12, 31). The presence of the Most High continually preserved in this sovereign Child the divine revelations and the intellectual visions. And if sometimes his Providence suspended one kind of vision or enlightenment, She was enraptured by others; for from the clear vision of the Divinity, which I have mentioned above and which took place as soon as She was born and raised to heaven by the angels (No. 332) She retained the images of what She had seen. Thus coming from the wine cellar, where charity is set in order (Cant. 2, 4) her heart was wounded with love, and returning ever toward it in contemplation, She was again and again set afire body and soul in all her being. As her body was yet weak and tender and this love strong as death (Cant 8, 6), She soon felt the death pangs of love, of which She in her tenderness would have died, had not the Almighty strengthened Her and preserved by a miracle the inferior part of her being and her natural life. Many times however, the Lord permitted, that this tender and virginal little body should be overcome by the violence of love, so that the holy angels might sustain Her and comfort Her in the fulfillment of the saying of the Spouse: "Fulcite me floribus, quia amore langueo." "Stay me up with flowers, because I languish with love" (Cant. 11, 5). And this the most noble kind of martyrdom was a thousand times repeated in this heavenly Lady surpassing in it all the martyrs in merit, and also in sufferings.

381. The pain of love is so sweet and attractive, that the more it prevails the more it is sought, and he who suffers it, longs to hear him spoken of, whom he loves, thus

seeking to be cured by renewal of the wound. This most sweet deception serves to keep the soul in suspense between a painful life and a sweet death. This was the state of the child Mary, when speaking to her angels and hearing them discourse about her Beloved. She asked them many times, saying: "Ministers of my Lord, his messengers and most beautiful works of his hands, sparks of that divine fire, which consumes my heart, since you enjoy his eternal beauty unveiled and unrestrained, reveal to me the tokens of my Beloved; what are his conditions? Tell me whether perhaps I have displeased Him; tell me what He desires and seeks of me, and do not delay in lightening my pain, for I am dying of love."

382. And the supernal spirits replied: "Spouse of the Most High, thy Beloved is the only One, He that is for Himself, who has no need of anything but of whom all stand in need. He is infinite in his perfections, immense in his greatness, without limit in his power, ineffable in his wisdom, without measure in his goodness; He gives a beginning to all things without having a beginning Himself; He governs the world without asking consent, preserves it without having need of it, sees the beauty of all creation without ever being comprehended in his beauty by any one, and raises to blessedness by his beauty those who succeed in seeing Him face to face. Infinite are, O Lady, the perfections of thy Spouse: they exceed thy comprehension and his high judgments are inscrutable to the creature."

383. In such colloquies and many others, too high for our capacity, most holy Mary passed her infancy, conversing with the angels and the Most High, becoming more and more like to Him. As her fervor and longing to see our highest Good increased, being en-

tirely enraptured in Him, She was by the disposal of the Lord many times borne bodily by the hands of the angels to the empyrean heaven, where She enjoyed the presence of the Divinity. On those occasions She would at times see God face to face, at other times by infused images of the highest and most godlike kind. She saw also the angels by clear and intuitive vision, their degrees, orders and hierarchies, and many sacraments were made manifest to Her on each occasion. As these visions were often repeated She gradually, by becoming accustomed to them and by acts of virtue which She exercised in connection with them, began to appear more a divine than a human creature. No one else would ever be capable of such favors and of others connected therewith; and even the mortal nature of that Queen herself would have been deprived of life, if She had not been preserved by a miracle.

384. When in her childhood it was necessary to accept any service or benefit at the hands of her parents or of any other creature, She always received it with interior humility and thankfulness, beseeching the Lord to reward the good which they did in love toward Her. Though She had attained such a high degree of sanctity and though She was filled with the light of God and his mysteries, She nevertheless judged Herself to be the least of all creatures, and whenever She made comparisons, She ascribed to herself the last place of all. Even of the nourishment necessary to sustain life, She considered Herself unworthy, though She was the Queen and Mistress of all creation.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

385. My daughter, he that received more ought to consider himself more needy, since his debt becomes so

much the greater. All should humiliate themselves since of themselves they are nothing, nor can they do anything or possess ought. On this account they that are raised up by the hand of the Almighty, should humiliate themselves as mere dust. For, left to themselves and to their nothingness and unworthiness, they should esteem themselves so much the more indebted and bound to thankfulness for that which by themselves they can never repay. Let man acknowledge its condition: for no one can say: I have made myself, I preserve myself in existence, I can prolong my life or postpone death. All his being and preservation is in the hands of the Lord; let each one therefore humble himself in his presence, and thou, my dearest, do not forget these truths.

386. I wish also that thou esteem as a great treasure the virtue of silence, which I have practiced from my birth. By the light which the Most High gave me, I was conversant with all the virtues; but I attached myself to this one with great predilection, resolving to adhere to it as a companion and as a friend during all my life. Therefore I kept it inviolate, although I could speak from the moment of my entrance into the world. To speak without moderation and forethought is a two-edged sword, which wounds both him that speaks and him that hears, and thus in two ways destroys charity or hinders it in all the virtues. From this thou canst understand, how much God is offended by the vice of inconsiderate and loose talk, and how justly loquacity, and the tumult of disputation estranges his spirit and veils his presence. For, those that talk much, cannot keep free from grievous sins (Prov 10, 19). Only with God and with his saints one can speak with security, and even then it must be with forethought and discretion. With creatures it is very difficult to preserve the

golden middle, without danger of passing from the correct and necessary to the imperfect and superfluous.

387. The way to avoid this danger is to tend continually toward the other extreme, striving rather to reflect and be silent. For the prudent medium of speaking only what is necessary, is found more in reflection than in immoderate speech. Remember, my soul, that thou canst not disport thyself in self-sought conversation with creatures without relinquishing God in the secret interior of thy soul; and that which thou canst not do without impudence and insult in thy intercourse with other creatures, thou shouldst not do in thy dealings with thy Lord and the Lord of all. Close thy ears to the deceitful conversations, which might induce thee to speak what thou shouldst not; for it is not just, that thou speak more than what is enjoined thee by thy Lord and Master. Listen to his holy law, which He has, with so liberal a hand, written in thy heart; hear the voice of thy Pastor, and answer Him there, and Him only. I wish to impress thee with the fact, that if thou art to be my disciple and companion, it must be by signalizing thyself especially in this virtue of silence. Reflect much, and write this doctrine in thy heart today, and attach thyself more and more to this virtue; for first I wish to see thee established in this, and then I will teach thee how to speak.

388. I do not dissuade thee from speaking words of admonition and consolation to thy daughters and thy subjects. Speak also with those, who can give thee tokens of thy Beloved, and who can instruct and inflame thee with his love. In such kind of conversation thou wilt acquire a profitable silence of the soul; since in them is excited a horror and disgust for conversation of men and thou wilt learn to relish conversation

about the wished-for eternal Good only. Then with the force of love transforming thy being into that of thy Beloved, the impetus of thy passions will weaken and thou shalt arrive at that kind of sweet martyrdom, which I suffered, when I complained of my body and of mortal life; for they seemed to me a dreary imprisonment which hindered my flight, although not my love. O my daughter, forget all the earthly things in the hiding place of thy silence, and imitate me with all thy fervor and all thy strength; for thus shalt thou arrive at that state, to which thy Spouse invites thee. There thou shalt hear the consoling words, which sustained me in the pangs of my love: "My dove, dilate thy heart, and give admission, my cherished one, to that sweet pain, for my heart is wounded by thy love." Thus the Lord spoke to me, and this thou thyself hast heard repeatedly, for to those that are alone and in silence does his Majesty speak.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE MOST HOLY CHILD MARY BEGAN TO SPEAK AT THE AGE OF ONE YEAR AND A HALF; AND HOW SHE WAS OCCUPIED UNTIL THE TIME OF HER DEPARTURE TO THE TEMPLE.

389. The time had arrived, in which the most holy Mary could profitably and with perfect propriety break her blessed silence, in which the voice of that heavenly Turtledove was to be heard on our earth in order that She might be the faithful harbinger of the springtime of grace (Cant 2, 12). But before She was commissioned by the Lord to speak with men (which was at the age of eighteen months), She was favored with a vision of the Divinity, not intuitive but intellectual, which was a summary of those already received and augmented the previous gifts and graces. In that vision a colloquy took place between the Child and the highest Lord, which I tremblingly presume to reproduce in words.

390. The Queen spoke to his Majesty: "Most High Lord and incomprehensible God, how canst Thou pursue with so great favors thy most useless and poor creature? How canst Thou unbend thy greatness in such loving condescension toward thy slave, who is incapable of making the least return? The Most High looks down upon the servant. The Most Powerful stoops to enrich the indigent! The Holy of holiest lowers Himself to the dust! I, O Lord, am the little one among the creatures, and least of all deserve thy favors. What shall I do in thy divine presence? How shall I requite what

I owe to Thee? What have I, O Lord, that is not thine, since Thou givest me being, life and activity? But I rejoice, O my Beloved, that Thou possessest all the good, and without Thee, the creature possesses nothing. I rejoice, that Thou alone canst claim the glory of raising up the little one, of favoring the most useless, giving existence to nothingness; for thus thy magnificence shall become more known and exalted."

391. The Lord answered Her and said: "My Dove and Beloved One, in my eyes thou hast found favor; thine are the sweetnesses of my delights, my friend and chosen one. I will manifest what in thee shall please Me most." These promises of the Lord wounded Her anew and made the most tender heart of the infant Queen pine in throes of love, though it had already grown strong; and the Most High in his pleasure continued and said: "I am the God of mercies and with immense love I am drawn toward mortals; among so many, who have by their faults offended Me, I see some just, who are my friends and who have served Me and do serve Me from their heart. I have resolved to save them by sending my Onlybegotten, in order that they may not be deprived of my glory, nor I of their eternal praise."

392. To this proposition the most holy child Mary responded: "Most high Lord and powerful King, thine are all creatures and thine the power; Thou alone are the holy One and the supreme Ruler of all creation: let thy own bounty move Thee, O Lord, to hasten the coming of thy Onlybegotten for the Redemption of the sons of Adam. Let now the desired day of my ancient Forefathers begin to dawn and let mortals see thy eternal salvation. Why, O most beloved Master, since Thou art a most kind Father of all mercies, dost Thou delay so much the day, which thy captive and afflicted chil-

dren expect with such longing? If my life can be of any service, I offer it gladly as a sacrifice for them."

393. The Most High urged Her with great benevolence, that from now on She should many times each day pray for the hastening of the Incarnation of the eternal Word and for the Redemption of all the human race, and that She should bewail the sins of men, which impede their salvation and restoration. Likewise He told Her, that it was now time to exercise all her outward faculties, and that for his own greater glory it was befitting that She should converse with human creatures. Therefore, in order to comply with his wishes, the Child said to his Majesty:

394. "Most high Lord and incomprehensible Majesty, how can mere dust venture to treat of such hidden and exalted mysteries? How can she, who is the least of all the womanborn, dare to converse of secrets so precious in thy sight? How can I win for men thy favor, and what can a creature do, that has served Thee in nothing? But Thou, O my Beloved, wilt be obliged by poverty itself: in Thee the ailing will find health, the thirsty will find the fountains of thy mercy, and the strength to fulfill thy will. If Thou ordainest, O my Lord, that I open my lips in order to converse and speak with others besides Thyself who art all my good and my desire, I beseech Thee, consider my frailty and ward off the danger. Very hard it is for rational creatures not to fall into excess in conversation. If it is thy pleasure, I would rather keep silence during all my life in order to avoid all danger of losing Thee; for if this should happen, I shall not be able to outlive it one moment."

395. This was the answer of the most holy child Mary, for She was full of apprehension on account of

the new and dangerous duty of conversing with men which was now enjoined on Her. As far as her inclinations were concerned, if God had allowed it, She desired to observe inviolate silence and be mute during all her life. O great confusion and shining example for the insipidity of mortals, that She, who could not sin in speech, should tremble at its dangers! And we, who cannot open our mouths without sinning in our words, are consumed with mortal longings after the dissipation of speech! But, O my most sweet Child and Queen of all creation, how canst Thou desire to remain silent? Dost Thou forget, my Mistress, that thy silence would be the ruin of the world, the sorrow of heaven, and also, according to our ignorant way of understanding it, a dreary void for the most blessed Trinity? Dost Thou not know, that even in a single one of thy words namely in thy answer to the holy archangel: "Fiat nihi secundum verbum tuum" "Let it be done to me according to thy word" (Luc. 1, 38) Thou wilt give the plenitude of perfection to all that exists? To the eternal Father Thou givest a Daughter, to the eternal Son, a Mother; to the Holy Ghost, a Spouse; to the angels, reparation; to men, redemption; to the heavens, glory; peace to the earth; an advocate to the world; health to the sick, life to the dead. In this answer Thou givest existence and reality to that, which must be considered greater than anything else outside of his own essence, and greater than all the other works that God could decree and ordain. Since thus the greatest work of divine Omnipotence and the welfare of all creation depends entirely on thy word how canst Thou desire to be speechless, O my Lady and Mistress? Speak then, O Child, who canst speak so well, and let thy voice be heard through all the vast circles of the heavens!

396. With the most prudent answer of this Spouse the Most High was much pleased and his heart was again wounded by the loving fear of our great Child. Therefore, as if fully requited by their beloved, and as if conferring among Themselves in regard to her petition, the three divine Persons spoke those words of the Canticles: "Our sister is little and hath no breasts. What shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to? If she be a wall, let us build up on it bulwarks of silver" (Cant 8, 8). Little thou art, beloved sister, in thy eyes, but great art thou and great wilt thou be in our eyes. In this humility thou hast wounded our heart with one of thy hairs (Cant. 4, 9). Thou art little in thy own judgment and estimation, and this is what moves Us with love for thee. Thou hast not as yet the breasts of nourishing words; but thou also art not a woman according to the law of sin, for in regard to thee, this law does not hold, nor do We wish that it should extend over thee. Thou humblest thyself, though thou art great beyond all creatures: thou fearest, though thou art secure: thou guardest against a danger, which cannot approach thee. What shall We do for this our sister on the day, in which she shall open her lips according to our wish in order to bless Us while the mortals do it in order to blaspheme against our holy name? What shall We do in order to celebrate so festive a day as that, in which she begins to speak? How shall We reward such humble modesty of her, who was always the delight of our eyes? Sweet was her silence, and most sweet will be her voice in our ears. If she is a fortress founded on the abundance of our graces and made invincible by the power of our right hand, We will build upon such strong walls turrets of silver, We will heap new gifts upon the former ones, and let these our

turrets be of silver so as to make them more rich and precious. Let her words, when she begins to speak, be most pure, candid, strong and full of meaning to our ears; let our grace overflow from her lips, and let our powerful arm of protection rest upon her."

397. While, according to our way of thinking, this conference took place between the three Persons of the Divinity, our infant Queen was strengthened and consoled in her humble solicitude concerning the first exercise of her speech. The Lord promised Her, that He would govern her words and assist Her to direct them all toward his service and pleasure. Then She petitioned his Majesty anew for his permission and blessing to open her lips so full of grace, and, being prudent and considerate in all things, She spoke her first words to her parents, saint Joachim and Anne, asking of them their blessing and thus acknowledging that from them after God She had her life and being. The happy parents heard Her and at the same time they saw that She was able to walk by herself. The happy Anne in great joy of her spirit took Her into her arms and said: "My Daughter and Beloved of my heart, blessed and glorious to the Lord be the hour, in which we hear thy words and in which Thou beginnest to walk in his holy service. Let thy words and sayings be few, well measured and considered, and let thy footsteps be directed aright toward the service and honor of our Creator."

398. The most holy Child heard these and other exhortations of her holy mother Anne, and She engraved them in her tender heart to preserve them in profound humility and obedience. During the year and a half, which remained of the three before her departure into the temple, She spoke but few words beside those addressed to her mother; for holy Anne, in order to hear

Her speak, was wont to call Her and request Her to speak of God and his mysteries. The heavenly Child fulfilled her wish listening to and asking questions of her mother; She that excelled in wisdom all the woman-born, desired to learn and be instructed. Thus the Daughter and the mother passed their time in sweetest colloquies concerning the Lord.

399. It would not be easy, nor even possible, to describe the doings of the heavenly child Mary during these eighteen months of companionship with her mother. The latter shed copious and sweet tears of love and gratitude when at times she looked upon her Child, more venerable than the symbolic ark of the covenant. Yet never did Anne reveal the secret of her heart that her Daughter was chosen to be the Mother of the Messias, although they often spoke of this ineffable mystery. At such times the Child was inflamed with the most ardent love and She spoke of it in the most exalted terms, innocently extolling her own dignity without being aware thereof, while her most blessed mother, holy Anne, was filled more and more with joy, love and solicitude for her Daughter and her heart's Treasure.

400. The strength of the tender Child was by far inadequate for the fulfillment of the exercises and practices of humility to which her humble love urged Her on; for this Mistress of all creatures esteemed Herself the lowest of them all and was anxious to exhibit these humble sentiments in her actions, by taking upon Herself the most abject and servile occupations of the household. She feared that if She did not serve all that were with Her, She could not satisfy her obligations and would fall short of her duty in the sight of the Lord. While the real cause of her not performing all that She wished was none other than the insufficiency of her bodily forces,

and while the highest seraphim would have kissed the place, where her sacred feet had touched; yet She was often full of holy fear lest She be deprived of doing the most humble services, such as cleaning and scrubbing the house. As She was not always permitted to engage in such things when others were present, She tried to do it when alone, being on such occasions assisted by the holy angels and thus in a measure reaping the fruit of her humility through their help.

401. The family of Joachim was not rich, though at the same time he could not have been called poor. Comformable to the honored standing of her family, saint Anne desired to dress her most holy Daughter as best she could afford within the bounds of decency and modesty. The most humble Child yielded to this maternal solicitude during the time of her voluntary silence without protest; but when She began to speak, She humbly asked her mother not to clothe Her in costly and showy garments, but to procure for Her garments of coarse and poor material, if possible, such as had already been worn by others and of an ash-grey color, similar to that which in our day is worn by the nuns of saint Clare. The holy Mother, who looked upon and respected her Daughter as her Mistress, answered: "My Daughter, I will conform to thy desire in regard to the form and color of thy dress; but thy strength will not permit the coarseness which thou desirest, and in this regard I wish that thou obey me."

402. The Child obedient to the will of her mother and never objecting in anything, acquiesced and allowed Herself to be clothed in the garments which were provided. They were of the color and form desired by Her, and similar to the dress worn by children dedicated to a devout life. Although She desired them to be coarser and

poorer, She supplied this want by obedience, deeming obedience more precious than sacrifice (I Kings 15, 22). Thus the most holy child Mary had the merit of obedience to her mother and of humility in her aspirations, deeming Herself unworthy of the use of even that which is necessary to preserve natural life. In the virtue of obedience toward her parents She was most distinguished and exact during the three years of her stay with them; by her divinely infused science She knew their interior wishes and thus She was beforehand in fulfilling them to the minutest point. She asked the permission and blessing of her mother for whatever She undertook to do Herself, kissing her hand with great humility and reverence. The mother outwardly permitted this, while inwardly She venerated the grace and exalted dignity of her Daughter.

403. At times She would retire to enjoy, by Herself and with greater liberty, the company and intercourse of her holy angels and to give outward tokens of the burning love of her Spouse. In some of her exercises She prostrated Herself, tearfully afflicting that most perfect and tender little body of hers for the sins of mortals, supplicating the mercy and blessings of God for them, and striving to gain these favors by the exercise of heroic virtues. The grief of her heart on account of the sins made known to Her, and the pangs of love with which it was accompanied, caused in the heavenly Child intensest sorrow and pain, nevertheless, in order to be in all things the Mother of mercy and the Mediatrix of grace, She taxed also her bodily strength during that tender age in works of penance and mortification, sparing no exertion that time and opportunity permitted in order to gain grace for Herself and for us men.

404. When She reached the age of two years She be-

gan to exercise her special pity and charity toward the poor. She solicited alms for them of saint Anne, and the kind-hearted mother readily granted her petitions, both for the sake of the poor and to satisfy the tender charity of her most holy Daughter, at the same time encouraging Her who was the Mistress of mercy and charity, to love and esteem the poor. Besides giving what She obtained expressly for distribution among the poor, She reserved part of her meals for the same purpose, in order that from her infancy it might be said of Her more truly than of Job: from my infancy compassion grew with me (Job 31, 18). She gave to the poor not as if conferring a benefit upon them, but as paying a debt due in justice, saying in her heart: this my brother and master deserves what he needs and what I possess without desert. In giving alms She kissed the hands of the poor, and whenever She was alone, She kissed their feet, or, if this was impossible, She would kiss the ground over which they had passed. Never did She give an alms to the poor without conferring still greater favors on their souls by interceding for them and thus dismissing them relieved in body and soul.

405. Not less admirable were the humility and obedience of the most holy Child in permitting Herself to be taught to read and to do other things as other children in that time of life. She was instructed in reading and other arts by her parents and She submitted, though She had infused knowledge of all things created. The angels were filled with admiration at the unparalleled wisdom of this Child, who willingly listened to the teaching of all. Her holy mother Anne, as far as her intuition and love permitted, observed with rapture the heavenly Princess and blessed the Most High in Her. But with her love, as the time for presenting Her in the

temple approached, grew also the dread of the approaching end of the three years set by the Almighty and the consciousness, that the terms of her vow must punctually be fulfilled. Therefore the child Mary began to prepare and dispose her mother, manifesting to her, six months before, her ardent desire of living in the temple. She recounted the benefits, which they had received at the hands of the Lord, how much they were obliged to seek his greater pleasure, and how, when She should be dedicated to God in the temple, She would be more her Daughter than in their own house.

406. The holy Anne heard the discreet arguments of her child Mary; but, though She was resigned to the divine will and wished to fulfill her promise of offering up her beloved Daughter, yet the natural force of her love toward such an unequalled and beloved Treasure, joined with the full understanding of its inestimable value, caused a mortal strife in her most faithful heart at the mere thought of her departure, which was closely at hand. There is no doubt, that she would have lost her life in this fierce and vivid sorrow, if the hand of the Almighty had not comforted her: for the grace and dignity of her heavenly Daughter was fully known to her and had entirely ravished her heart, making the presence of Mary more dear to her than life. Full of this grief she said to the Child: "My beloved Daughter, for many years I have longed for Thee and only for a few years do I merit to have thy company; but thus let the will of God be fulfilled; I do not wish to be unfaithful to my promise of sending Thee to the temple, but there is yet time left for fulfilling it: have patience until the day arrives for the accomplishment of thy wishes."

407. A few days before most holy Mary reached the age of three years, She was favored with an abstract vis-

ion of the Divinity, in which it was made known to Her that the time of her departure for the temple ordained by God, had arrived, and that there She was to live dedicated and consecrated to his service. Her most pure soul was filled with new joy and gratitude at this prospect and speaking with the Lord, She gave Him thanks saying: "Most high God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, my eternal and highest Good, since I cannot praise Thee worthily, let it be done in the name of this humble slave by the angelic spirits; since Thou, immense Lord, who hast need of none, dost look upon this lowly wormlet of the earth in thy unbounded mercy. Whence this great benefit to me, that Thou shouldst receive me into thy house and service, since I do not even merit the most abject spot of the earth for my place of habitation? But as Thou art urged thereto by thy own greatness, I beseech Thee to inspire the hearts of my parents to fulfill thy holy will."

408. At the same time saint Anne had a vision, in which the Lord enjoined her to fulfill her promise by presenting her Daughter in the temple on the very day, on which the third year of her age should be complete. There is no doubt that this command caused more grief in saint Anne, than that given to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. But the Lord consoled and comforted Her, promising his grace and assistance in her loneliness during the absence of her beloved Daughter. The holy matron showed Herself prepared and ready to execute the command of the Almighty, and she answered full of submission by the following prayer: "Lord God, Master of all my being, I have pledged to thy service and to the temple my Daughter, whom Thou, in thy ineffable mercy, hast given me: She is thine, and I return Her to Thee with thanks for the time in which I have enjoyed

Her, for having been chosen to conceive Her and assist in her formation. But remember, God and Lord, that in the keeping of thy inestimable Treasure I was rich; I enjoyed her company in this desert valley of tears, She was the joy of my sorrow, the alleviation of my labors, the mirror for the regulation of my life, the example of a supernal perfection, which stimulated my remissness and enkindled my affections. Through that Creature alone have I hoped for mercy and grace, and I fear, that in being deprived of Her, I will fall away from all thy grace. Heal, O Lord, the wound of my heart, and deal with me not as I have deserved, but look upon me as a kind Father of mercies, while I bring my Daughter to the temple according to thy command."

409. Saint Joachim also had a visitation or vision of the Lord at this time, receiving the same command as Anne. Having conferred with each other and taking account of the will of the Lord, they resolved to fulfill it with humble submission and appointed the day on which the Child was to be brought to the temple. Great was also the grief of this holy old man, though not quite so great as that of saint Anne, for the high mystery of her being the future Mother of God was yet concealed from him.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

410. My dearest daughter, keep in mind, that all the living are born destined for death, but ignorant of the time allowed them; this they know for certain however, that the term of life is short, that eternity is without end, and that in this life only they can harvest what will yield life or death eternal. In this dangerous pilgrimage of life God has ordained, that no one shall know for certain, whether he is worthy (Eccles. 9, 1) of his love or

hate; for if he uses his reason rightly, this uncertainty will urge him to seek with all his powers the friendship of that same Lord. God justifies his cause as soon as the soul acquires the use of reason; for from that time onward He enlightens and urges and guides man toward virtue and draws him away from sin, teaching him to distinguish between water and fire, to approve of the good and reject evil, to choose virtue and repel vice. Moreover, God calls and rouses the soul by his holy inspirations and continual promptings, provides the help of the Sacraments, doctrines and commandments, urges man onward through his angels, preachers, confessors, ministers and teachers, by special tribulations and favors, by the example of strangers, by trials, deaths and other happenings and dispositions of his Providence; He disposes the things of life so as to draw toward Him all men, for He wishes all to be saved. Thus He places at the disposal of the creature a vast field of benevolent help and assistance, which it can and should use for its own advancement. Opposing all this are the tendencies of the inferior and sensitive nature, infected with the *fomes peccati,* the foment of sin, tending toward sensible objects and by the lower appetites and repugnances, disturbing the reason and enthralling the will in the false liberty of ungoverned desires. The demon also, by his fascinations and his deceitful and iniquitous suggestions obscures the interior light, and hides the deathly poison beneath the pleasant exterior. But the Most High does not immediately forsake his creatures; He renews his mercy and his assistance, recalling them again and again, and if they respond to his first call, He adds others according to his equity, increasing and multiplying them in proportion as the soul corresponds. As a reward of the victory, which the soul wins over itself, the force

of his passions and concupiscences is diminished, the spirit is made free to soar higher and rise above its own inclinations and above the demons.

412. But if man neglects to rise above his low desires and his forgetfulness, he yields to the enemy of God and man. The more he alienates himself from the goodness of God, so much the more unworthy does he become of the secret callings of the Most High, and so much the less does he appreciate his assistance, though it be great. For the demon and the passions have obtained a greater dominion and power over his intellect and have made him more unfit and more incapable of the grace of the Almighty. Thereon, my dear daughter, rests the whole salvation or condemnation of souls, that is, in commencing to admit or resist the advances of the Lord. I desire thee not to forget this doctrine, so that thou mayest respond to the many calls which thou receivest of the Most High. See thou be strong in resisting his enemies and punctually solicitous in fulfilling the pleasure of thy Lord, for thereby thou wilt gratify Him and attend to the commands made known to thee by divine light. I loved my parents dearly, and the tender words of my mother wounded my heart; but as I knew it to be the will of the Lord to leave them, I forgot her house and my people in order to follow my Spouse. The proper education and instruction of children will do much toward making them more free and habituated to the practice of virtue, since thus they will be accustomed to follow the sure and safe guiding star of reason from its first dawn.

BOOK TWO

Treats of the Presentation of the Princess of Heaven in the Temple, the Favors She Received at the Hand of God, the Sublime Perfection with which She Observed the Rules of the Temple, the Heavenly Excellence of Her Heroic Virtues and Visions, Her Most Holy Espousal and other Events up to the Incarnation of the Son of God.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY IN THE TEMPLE AT THE AGE OF THREE YEARS.

413. Among the types which foreshadowed the most holy Mary in the written Law, none was more expressive than the ark of the covenant, not only on account of the material of which it was constructed, and its contents, but also on account of the purposes for which it served and the effects which the Lord wrought through it and in connection with it in the ancient synagogue. It was all a prototype of this Lady and of what She was to do in the new Church of the Gospel. The incorruptible cedar, of which it was made, not by chance, but by divine disposition (Exod. 25, 10), typified clearly our mystical Ark Mary, free from the corruption of actual sin and from the secret worminess of original guilt with its inseparable ferment of disorderly passions. The finest and purest gold (Exod. 25, 11), which covered it on the outside and inside, certainly indicated the most perfect and exalted graces and gifts, which shone forth in her heavenly thoughts, in her works and activities, in her habits

and the operations of her faculties; so that in no exterior or interior part of this mystical Ark could be discerned ought, which at any moment of time was not entirely covered by the gold of the most exquisite and finest carat.

414. The stone tablets of the law, the vase of the manna and the miraculous staff (Heb. 9, 4), which that ancient ark contained and preserved, cannot be surpassed in expressive significance of the eternal and incarnate Word, enclosed within that living Ark the most holy Mary, for He was her onlybegotten Son, the living foundation-rock of the evangelical Church (I Cor. 3, 11). In this virginal ark of Mary was placed the key-stone which was to join the Gentiles and the Jews, and was torn from the mountain of its eternal generation (Ephes. 2, 20) in order that on it might be written by the finger of God the new Law of grace. Thus in the old ark Mary was foreshadowed as the great Queen, who was to be the depositary of all that God provided and operated for his creatures. She also enclosed within Herself the manna of the Divinity and of grace, and the wonder-working staff of miracles and prodigies, so that this heavenly and mystical Ark alone contained the fountain of grace, namely God himself, overflowing into the rest of mankind and forming the nucleus of all the miracles and prodigies of God. In Mary therefore all that the Lord desired to operate and manifest is contained and deposited.

415. Accordingly the ark of the testament (not in itself, but on account of the truth which it foreshadowed) served as the seat and foot-stool of propitiation, where the Lord was seated in the tribunal of his mercies, to listen to his people, to answer them and distribute his gifts and favors; for the ancient ark typified most holy Mary, the throne of grace and the true mystical propitiatory

which He had expressly made for his indwelling. Thus it seems that the tribunal of the divine justice remains set up in God himself, while the propitiatory and the tribunal of his mercy was set up in Mary, in order that to Her, as a throne of grace, we might approach in assured confidence to present our petitions for those benefits, graces and mercies, which outside of the Queen Mary, are unheard of and unattainable by the human race.

416. Such a sacred and mysterious Ark, constructed by the hands of the Lord himself for his habitation and as the propitiatory of his people, could not remain with propriety outside of his temple, where was preserved that other material ark, which was only a figure of this spiritual and true Ark of the new covenant. Therefore its Author ordained that She be placed in his house and temple as soon as the first three years of her infancy should be completed. But I am astonished to find a wonderful difference in regard to that which happened with the primitive and figurative ark and that which came to pass with the second and true ark of the covenant. For, though the ancient ark had no other importance than that of presignifying Mary and the mysteries connected with Her, when the king David transferred it to different places, and when afterwards Solomon his son placed it in the temple, as in its proper place of rest, all was done with great festivities and rejoicings of that ancient people, as is shown by the solemn processions arranged by David from the house of Abinadab to the house of Obededom (II King 6, 10), and thence to the tabernacle of Sion, his own city (Ibid. 12); likewise, when Solomon transferred it from Sion to the new temple, which he had built as the house of God and of prayer by command of the Lord.

417. On all these occasions the ancient ark of the Tes-

tament was borne along in public veneration and most solemn celebrations, amid the strains of music, dancing, sacrifices, the rejoicings of the kings and of the whole people of Israel, as is related in the sacred history of the second and third book of the Kings and the first and second of Paralipomenon. But our true and mystical Ark, the most holy Mary, although She was the most precious, the most estimable and worshipful of all the creatures, was not brought to the temple with such solemn show and public ostentation; during the transferring of this mysterious Ark, the sacrifice of animals, the royal pomp, and the royal majesty were wanting. She was carried from the house of her father Joachim in the arms of her humble mother Anne, who, though she was not very poor, wished to bear her beloved Daughter on her arms in order to present Her in the temple without ostentation of riches, alone and unnoticed by the people. The glory and majesty of this procession, according to the wishes of the Most High, was to be divine and invisible. All the sacraments and mysteries of the most holy Mary are so exalted and hidden that according to the inscrutable decrees of the Lord many of them are concealed to this day. He it is that holds in his hands the time and the hour for the revelation of all things, and of each one in particular.

418. Lost in admiration of this wonder, prostrate in the presence of the Most High and in the praise of his high judgments, I was favored by his Majesty with the following explanation: "Understand, my soul, that if I provided that the ark of the old Testament be venerated with so much festivity and outward show, it was because it was an express figure of Her, who was to be the Mother of the incarnate Word. The first ark was material and irrational, and this ostentation and celebrity

could be arranged for it without difficulty; but during her life on earth in mortal flesh, I would not permit such celebration in connection with the true and living ark, Mary; for thou and the rest of the souls are to look upon Her as an example during your pilgrimage. I do not desire those who are written in my memory for eternal election to expect honors and the inconsiderate praise and applause of men as a part of their reward for working in my honor and service during mortal life. Nor must they be put in danger of dividing the love of their God, who justifies them and makes them saints, with those who merely proclaim them as such. The one and only Creator has made them and sustains them, illumines and defends them; therefore their love and attention must be single and undivided, and it must not be diverted even by a thankful regard for those who honor them as just. The love of God is most sensitive, the human will is most frail and limited; if it is divided, it can only be small and very imperfect in its activity, easily coming to nought. Therefore I did not wish Her, who was to be the example of all holiness and who was free from all danger of a fall through my protection, to be renowned, or specially honored during her life, nor was She to be brought to the temple amid the outward show of honor."

419. "Moreover, I have sent my Onlybegotten from heaven and have created Her, who was to be his Mother, for the very purpose of drawing the world from its error and of undeceiving mortals, who have established the unjust and sinful law, that the poor are to be despised and the rich esteemed, that the humble are to be humiliated and the proud to be exalted, the virtuous to be maligned and the sinful applauded, that the timorous and modest are to be considered as fools and the arrogant to be held as valiant, that poverty should be considered as shameful

and unfortunate, while riches, pomp, ostentation, splendor, honors, perishable pleasures should be sought and prized by foolish and carnal men. All this the incarnate Word and his Mother, in coming among them, were to reprove and condemn as deceitful and false, so that mortals might perceive the terrible danger of loving and entertaining so blindly the deceitful sensible pleasures, in which they live. Through this insensate love it happens that they so persistently fly from humility, meekness and poverty and evade all that pertains to the true virtue of penance and abnegation of self. And yet these virtues are truly acceptable in my eyes and according to my justice; for the holy, the honorable, the just actions, are to be rewarded with eternal glory, whereas the contrary ones are to be visited by everlasting punishment."

420. "This truth earthly and carnal eyes do not see, nor do they care to attend to the light which teaches them. But thou, soul, observe it and write it in thy heart, taking an example from the incarnate Word and from his Mother, and imitating Them closely therein. She was holy and, in my estimation, most acceptable to Christ; to Her was due all the veneration and worship of men, and even more than they could give; yet I provided and ordained in her regard that She receive no honor or recognition at that time, so that She, as the Mistress of truth, might be the most shining example of all that is holy, perfect, estimable and safest for the instruction and guidance of my elect. She was to be the shining example of humility, of retirement, of contempt and horror for the dreadful vanity of the world, of love for sufferings, tribulations, insults, afflictions and dishonors inflicted by creatures. All holiness is adverse and contrary to the applause, honors and estimation of the world, and I decreed that the most pure Mary should not

be burdened by them, nor do I desire that my friends should enjoy or be pleased with them. If for my glory it sometimes happens that they become known to the world, it is not because they have desired it or looked for it; but because they, always remaining in the humility and in the sentiment proper to their state, resign themselves to my Providence. For themselves and as far as they are concerned, they seek and love that which the world despises and which the incarnate Word and his most holy Mother strove after and have taught." This was the answer which the Lord gave to my wondering inquiry and thus did He instruct me in regard to what I should seek and strive after.

421. The three years' time decreed by the Lord having been completed, Joachim and Anne set out from Nazareth, accompanied by a few of their kindred and bringing with them the true living Ark of the covenant, the most holy Mary, borne on the arms of her mother in order to be deposited in the holy temple of Jerusalem. The beautiful Child, by her fervent and loving aspirations, hastened after the ointments of her Beloved, seeking in the temple Him, whom She bore in her heart. This humble procession was scarcely noticed by earthly creatures, but it was invisibly accompanied by the angelic spirits, who, in order to celebrate this event, had hastened from heaven in greater numbers than ordinary as her bodyguard, and were singing in heavenly strains the glory and praise of the Most High. The Princess of heaven heard and saw them as She hastened her beautiful steps along in the sight of the highest and the true Solomon. Thus they pursued their journey from Nazareth to the holy city of Jerusalem, and also the parents of the holy child Mary felt in their hearts great joy and consolation of spirit.

422. They arrived at the holy temple, and the blessed Anne on entering took her Daughter and Mistress by the hand, accompanied and assisted by saint Joachim. All three offered a devout and fervent prayer to the Lord; the parents offering to God their Daughter, and the most holy Child, in profound humility, adoration and worship, offering up Herself. She alone perceived that the Most High received and accepted Her, and, amid divine splendor which filled the temple, She heard a voice saying to Her: "Come, my Beloved, my Spouse, come to my temple, where I wish to hear thy voice of praise and worship." Having offered their prayers, they rose and betook themselves to the priest. The parents consigned their Child into his hands and he gave them his blessing. Together they conducted Her to the portion of the temple buildings, where many young girls lived to be brought up in retirement and in virtuous habits, until old enough to assume the state of matrimony. It was a place of retirement especially selected for the first-born daughters of the royal tribe of Juda and the sacerdotal tribe of Levi.

423. Fifteen stairs led up to the entrance of these apartments. Other priests came down these stairs in order to welcome the blessed child Mary. The one that had received them, being according to the law one of a minor order, placed Her on the first step. Mary, with his permission, turned and kneeling down before Joachim and Anne, asked their blessing and kissed their hands, recommending herself to their prayers before God. The holy parents in tenderest tears gave Her their blessing; whereupon She ascended the fifteen stairs without any assistance. She hastened upward with incomparable fervor and joy, neither turning back, nor shedding tears, nor showing any childish regret at parting from her parents. To see Her, in so tender an age, so full of

strange majesty and firmness of mind, excited the admiration of all those present. The priests received Her among the rest of the maidens, and saint Simeon consigned Her to the teachers, one of whom was the prophetess Anne. This holy matron had been prepared by the Lord by especial grace and enlightenment, so that She joyfully took charge of this Child of Joachim and Anne. She considered the charge a special favor of divine Providence and merited by her holiness and virtue to have Her as a disciple, who was to be the Mother of God and Mistress of all the creatures.

424. Sorrowfully her parents Joachim and Anne retraced their journey to Nazareth, now poor as deprived of the rich Treasure of their house. But the Most High consoled and comforted them in their affliction. The holy priest Simeon, although he did not at this time know of the mystery enshrined in the child Mary, obtained great light as to her sanctity and her special selection by the Lord; also the other priests looked upon Her with great reverence and esteem. In ascending the fifteen stairs the Child brough to fulfillment, that, which Jacob saw happening in sleep; for here too were angels ascending and descending: the ones accompanying, the others meeting their Queen as She hastened up; whereas at the top God was waiting in order to welcome Her as his Daughter and Spouse. She also felt by the effects of the overflowing love, that this truly was the house of God and the portal of heaven.

425. The child Mary, when brought to her teacher, knelt in profound humility before her and asked her blessing. She begged to be admitted among those under her direction, obedience and counsel, and asked her kind forbearance in the labor and trouble, which She would occasion. The prophetess Anne, her teacher, received

Her with pleasure, and said to Her: "My Daughter, Thou shalt find in me a helpful mother and I will take care of Thee and of thy education with all possible solicitude." Then the holy Child proceeded to address Herself with the same humility to all the maidens which were then present; each one She greeted and embraced, offering Herself as their servant and requesting them, as older and more advanced than She in the duties of their position, to instruct and command Her. She also gave them thanks, that without her merit they admitted Her to their company.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.

426. My daughter, the greatest happiness, which can befall any soul in this mortal life, is that the Almighty call her to his house consecrated to his service. For by this benefit He rescues the soul from a dangerous slavery and relieves her of the vile servitude of the world, where, deprived of true liberty, she eats her bread in the sweat of her brow. Who is so dull and insipid as not to know the dangers of the worldly life, which is hampered by all the abominable and most wicked laws and customs introduced by the astuteness of the devil and the perversity of men? The better part is religious life and retirement; in it is found security, outside is a torment and a stormy sea, full of sorrow and unhappiness. Through the hardness of their heart and the total forgetfulness of themselves men do not know this truth and are not attracted by its blessings. But thou, O soul, be not deaf to the voice of the Most High, attend and correspond to it in thy actions: I wish to remind thee, that one of the greatest snares of the demon is to counteract

the call of the Lord, whenever he seeks to attract and incline the soul to a life of perfection in his service.

427. Even by itself, the public and sacred act of receiving the habit and entering religion, although it is not always performed with proper fervor and purity of intention, is enough to rouse the wrath and fury of the infernal dragon and his demons; for they know that this act tends not only to the glory of the Lord and the joy of the holy angels, but that religious life will bring the soul to holiness and perfection. It very often happens, that they who have received the habit with earthly and human motives, are afterwards visited by divine grace, which perfects them and sets all things aright. If this is possible even when the beginning was without a good intention, how much more powerful and efficacious will be the light and influence of grace and the discipline of religious life, when the soul enters under the influence of divine love and with a sincere and earnest desire of finding God, and of serving and loving Him?

428. Before the Most High reforms or advances those, who for any reason enter the religious state, it is no more than right, that in turning away from the world they avert also their eyes from it and blot out from their memory all its images, forgetting all that they have in so praiseworthy a manner left behind. Those that neglect this requirement and are ungrateful and disloyal toward God, will doubtlessly fall under the punishment of the wife of Lot (Gen. 19, 26), and if on account of the goodness of God they do not suffer this punishment in an equally open and visible manner, they nevertheless undergo it interiorly, remaining congealed and full of dryness, without fervor or advance in virtue. Forsaken by grace they thus do not attain the end of their vocation, make no progress in religion, nor find any spiritual

consolation in it, and do not merit to be visited by the Lord as children, but to be left to their own resources like unfaithful and fugitive slaves. Remember, Mary, that for thee all the world must be crucified and dead; that thou must have for it no memory, retain none of its images, pay it no attention, nor have any inclination toward any of its creatures. If sometimes it is necessary to exercise charity with thy neighbors, see that thou ordain it well and that thou safeguard beforehand the good of thy soul, its security and quiet, its interior tranquillity and peace. In these points, as far as is possible without sin, I admonish and command thee to go to the greatest extremes, if thou wishest to remain in my school.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING A SINGULAR FAVOR, WHICH THE ALMIGHTY CONFERRED ON MOST HOLY MARY AS SOON AS SHE WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE TEMPLE.

429. When the heavenly child Mary had dismissed her parents and entered upon her life in the temple, her teacher assigned to Her a place among the rest of the maidens, each of whom occupied a large alcove or little room. The Princess of heaven prostrated Herself on the pavement, and, remembering that it was holy ground and part of the temple, She kissed it. In humble adoration She gave thanks to the Lord for this new benefit, and She thanked even the earth for supporting Her and allowing Her to stand in this holy place; for She held Herself unworthy of treading and remaining upon it. Then She turned toward her holy angels and said to them: "Celestial princes, messengers of the Almighty, most faithful friends and companions, I beseech you with all the powers of my soul to remain with me in this holy temple of my Lord and as my vigilant sentinels, reminding me of all that I should do; instructing me and directing me as the teachers and guides of my actions, so that I may fulfill in all things the perfect will of the Most High, give pleasure to the holy priests and obey my teacher and my companions." And addressing in particular those whom I mentioned above as the twelve angels of the Apocalypse, She said: "And I beseech you, my ambassadors, if the Almighty permit you, go and console my holy parents in their affliction and solitude."

430. While the twelve angels executed her command, Mary remained with the others in heavenly conversation. She began to feel a supernal influence of great power and sweetness, spiritualizing Her and elevating Her in burning ecstasy, and immediately the Most High commanded the seraphim to assist in illumining and preparing her most holy soul. Instantly She was filled with a divine light and force, which perfected and proportioned her faculties in accordance with the mysteries now to be manifested to Her. Thus prepared and accompanied by her holy angels and many others, in the midst of a refulgent host, the celestial Child was raised body and soul to the empyrean heaven, where She was received by the holy Trinity with befitting benevolence and pleasure. She prostrated Herself in the presence of the most mighty and high Lord, as She was wont to do in all her visions, and adored Him in profound reverence and humility. Then She was further transformed by new workings of divine light, so that She saw, intuitively and face to face, the Divinity itself. This was the second time that It manifested Itself to Her in this intuitive manner during the first three years of her life.

431. By no human tongue or any sensible faculty could the effects of this vision and participation of the divine Essence ever be described. The Person of the Father spoke to the future Mother of his Son, and said: "My Dove, my beloved One, I desire thee to see the treasures of my immutable being and of my infinite perfections, and also to perceive the hidden gifts destined for the souls, whom I have chosen as heirs of my glory and who are rescued by the life-blood of the Lamb. Behold, my Daughter, how liberal I am toward my creatures, that know and love Me; how true in my words, how faithful in my promises, how powerful and admirable in my

works. Take notice, my Spouse, how ineffably true it is, that he who follows Me does not walk in darkness. I desire that thou, as my chosen One, be an eye-witness of the treasures which I hold in reserve for raising up the humble, enriching the poor, exalting the downtrodden, and for rewarding all that the mortals shall do and suffer for my name."

432. Other great mysteries were shown to the holy Child in this vision of the Divinity, for, as the object presented to the soul in such repeated intuitive visions is infinite, that which remains to be seen will always remain infinite and will excite greater and greater wonder and love in the one thus favored. The most holy Mary answered the Lord and said: "Most high, supreme and eternal God, incomprehensible Thou art in thy magnificence, overflowing in thy riches, unspeakable in thy mysteries, most faithful in thy promises, true in thy words, most perfect in thy works, for Thou art the Lord, infinite and eternal in thy essence and perfections. But, most high Lord, what shall my littleness begin to do at the sight of thy magnificence? I acknowledge myself unworthy to look upon thy greatness, yet I am in great need of being regarded by it. In thy presence, Lord, all creation is as nothing. What shall I thy servant do, who am but dust? Fulfill in me all thy desire and thy pleasure; and if trouble and persecutions suffered by mortals in patience, if humility and meekness are so precious in thy eyes, do not consent, O my Beloved, that I be deprived of such a rich treasure and pledge of thy love. But as for the rewards of these tribulations, give them to thy servants and friends, who deserve them better than I, for I have not yet labored in thy service and pleasure."

433. The Most High was much pleased with the petition of the heavenly Child and He gave Her to under-

stand that He would admit Her to suffering and labor for his love in the course of her life, without at the time revealing to Her the order and the manner in which He was to dispense them. The Princess of heaven gave thanks for this blessing and favor of being chosen to labor and suffer for the glory of God's name. Burning with desire of securing such favor, She asked of his Majesty to be allowed to make four vows in his presence: of chastity, of poverty, of obedience, and of perpetual enclosure in the temple whither He had called Her. To this petition the Lord answered and said to Her: "My Spouse, my thoughts rise above all that is created, and thou, my chosen one, dost not yet know what is to happen to thee in the course of thy life, and thou dost not yet understand why it is impossible to fulfill thy fervent desires altogether in the manner in which thou now dost imagine. The vow of chastity I permit and I desire that thou make it; I wish that from this moment thou renounce earthly riches. It is also my will that as far as possible, thou observe whatever pertains to the other vows, just as if thou hadst made them all. Thy desire shall be fulfilled through many other virgins in the coming law of grace; for, in order to imitate thee and to serve Me, they will make these same vows and live together in community and thou shalt be the Mother of many daughters."

434. The most holy Child then, in the presence of the Lord, made the vow of chastity and as for the rest without binding Herself, She renounced all affection for terrestrial and created things. She moreover resolved to obey all creatures for the sake of God. In the fulfillment of these promises She was more punctual, fervent and faithful than any who have ever made these vows or ever will make them. Forthwith the clear and intuitive vision

of the Divinity ceased, but She was not immediately restored to the earth. For, remaining in the empyrean heaven, She enjoyed another, an imaginary vision of the Lord in a lower state of ecstasy, so that in connection with it, She saw other mysteries.

435. In this secondary and imaginary vision some of the seraphim closest to the Lord approached Her and by his command adorned and clothed Her in the following manner. First all her senses were illumined with an effulgent light, which filled them with grace and beauty. Then they robed Her in a mantle or tunic of most exquisite splendor, and girded Her with a cincture of varycolored and transparent stones, of flashing brilliancy, which adorned Her beyond human comprehension. They signified the immaculate purity and the various heroic virtues of her soul. They placed on Her also a necklace or collar of inestimable and entrancing beauty, which contained three large stones, symbolic of the three great virtues of faith, hope and charity; this they hung around her neck letting it fall to her breast as if indicating the seat of these precious virtues. They also adorned her hands with seven rings of rare beauty whereby the Holy Ghost wished to proclaim that He had enriched Her with his holy gifts in a most eminent degree. In addition to all this the most holy Trinity crowned her head with an imperial diadem, made of inestimable material and set with most precious stones, constituting Her thereby as his Spouse and as the Empress of heaven. In testimony whereof the white and refulgent vestments were emblazoned with letters or figures of the finest and the most shining gold, proclaiming: Mary, Daughter of the eternal Father, Spouse of the Holy Ghost and Mother of the true Light. This last name or title the heavenly Mistress did not understand; but the angels understood it,

who, lost in wonder and praise of the Author, were assisting at this new and strange ceremony. Finally the attention of all the angelic spirits was drawn toward the Most High and a voice proceeded from the throne of the blessed Trinity, which, addressing the most holy Mary, spoke to Her: "Thou shalt be our Spouse, our beloved and chosen One among all creatures for all eternity; the angels shall serve thee and all the nations and generations shall call thee blessed" (Luc. 1, 48).

436. The sovereign Child being thus attired in the court dress of the Divinity, then celebrated a more glorious and marvelous espousal than ever could enter the mind of the highest cherubim and seraphim. For the Most High accepted Her as his sole and only Spouse and conferred upon Her the highest dignity which can befall a creature; He deposited within Her his own Divinity in the person of the Word and with it all the treasures of grace befitting such eminence. Meanwhile the most Humble among the humble was lost in the abyss of love and wonder which these benefits and favors caused in Her, and in the presence of the Lord She spoke: "Most high King and incomprehensible God, who art Thou and who am I, that thy condescension should look upon me who am dust, unworthy of such mercy? In Thee, my Lord, as in a clear mirror seeing thy immutable being, I behold and understand without error my lowliness and vileness, I admire thy immensity and deprecate my nothingness. At the sight of Thee I am annihilated and lost in astonishment, that the infinite Majesty should stoop to so lowly a worm, who can merit only oblivion and contempt of all the creatures. O Lord, my only Good, how art Thou magnified and exalted in this deed! What marvel dost Thou cause through me in thy angelic spirits, who understand thy infinite bounty, magnificence and

mercy in raising up from the dust her who in it is poor, and placing her among the princes (Ps. 112, 7)! I accept Thee, O my King and my Lord, as my Spouse and I offer myself as thy slave. Let not my understanding attend to any other object, nor my memory hold any other image, nor my will seek other object or pleasure than Thee, my highest Good, my true and only Love. Let not my eyes look upon human creature, nor my faculties and senses attend upon anything beside Thee and whatever thy Majesty shall direct. Thou alone for thy spouse, my Beloved, and she for Thee only, who art the immutable and eternal Good."

437. The Most High received with ineffable pleasure this consent of the sovereign Princess to enter into the new espousal with her most holy soul. As upon his True Spouse and as Mistress of all creation, He now lavished upon Her all the treasures of his grace and power, instructing Her to ask for whatever She desired and assuring Her that nothing would ever be denied Her. The most humble Dove at once proceeded to beseech the Lord with the most burning charity, to send his Onlybegotten to the world as a remedy for mortals; that all men be called to the true knowledge of his Divinity; that her natural parents, Joachim and Anne, receive an increase of the loving gifts of his right hand; that the poor and afflicted be consoled and comforted in their troubles; and that in Herself be fulfilled the pleasure of the divine will. These were some of the more express petitions addressed by the new Spouse on this occasion to the blessed Trinity. And all the angelic host sang new songs of admiration in praise of the Most High, while those appointed by his Majesty, midst heavenly music, bore back the holy Child from the empyrean heaven to the place in the temple, from which they had brought Her.

438. In order to commence at once to put in practice what She had promised in the presence of the Lord, She betook Herself to her instructress and offered her all that her mother, saint Anne, had left for her comfort and sustenance, with the exception of a few books and clothes. She requested Her to give it to the poor or use it for any other purpose according to her pleasure, and that She command and direct Her what She was to do. The discreet matron, (who was, as I have already said, the prophetess Anne) by divine impulse accepted and approved of the offering of the beautiful Child and dismissed Her entirely poor and stripped of everything except the garments which She wore. She resolved to take care of Her in a special manner as one destitute and poor; for the other maidens each possessed their spending money and a certain sum assigned and destined for their wearing apparel and for other necessities according to their inclinations.

439. The holy matron, having first consulted the high priest, also gave to the sweetest Child a rule of life. By thus despoiling and resigning Herself the Queen and Mistress of creation obtained a complete freedom and detachment from all creatures and from her own Self, neither possessing nor desiring anything except only the most ardent love of God and her own abasement and humiliation. I confess my great ignorance, my vileness and insignificance, which make me entirely unworthy to explain such supernal and hidden mysteries. For where the expert tongues of the wise, and the science and the love of the highest cherubim and seraphim are compelled to be mute, what can a useless and abject woman say? I know how much such an attempt would offend against the greatness of these mysteries, if obedience furnished no excuse. But even in obeying I tremble, and I fear that what I omit and am ignorant of, is the greater, and what

I know and say is the more insignificant part of all the mysteries and the doings of this City of God, the most holy Mary.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.

440. My daughter, among the great and ineffable favors of the Omnipotent in the course of my life, was the one which thou has just learned and described; for by this clear vision of the Divinity and of the incomprehensible essence I acquired knowledge of the most hidden sacraments and mysteries, and in this adornment and espousal I received incomparable blessings and felt the sweetest workings of the Divinity in my spirit. My desire to take the four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and enclosure pleased the Lord very much, and I merited thereby that the godfearing in the Church and in the law of grace are drawn to live under these vows, as is the custom in the present time. This was the beginning of that which you religious practice now, fulfilling the words of David in the forty-fourth psalm: "After Her shall virgins be brought to the King;" for the Lord ordained that my aspirations be the foundation of religious life and of the evangelical law. I fulfilled entirely and perfectly all that I proposed to the Lord, as far as was possible in my state of life; never did I look upon the face of a man, not even on that of my husband Joseph, nor on that of the angels, when they appeared to me in human form, though I saw and knew them all in God. Never did I incline toward any creature, rational or irrational, nor toward any human operation or tendency. But in all things I was governed by the Most High, either directly by Himself or indirectly through the obedience, to which I freely subjected myself.

441. Do not forget, my dearest, that the religious state

is consecrated and ordained by the Most High for maintaining the doctrine of Christian perfection and the close imitation of the life of my Son, and that therefore the souls, who in religious life are sunk in sleepy forgetfulness of their high blessing and lead a life more listless and lax than many worldly men, are objects of great wrath of the Lord, and a severer judgment and chastisement await them than others. The demon also, ancient and astute serpent as he is, uses more diligence in his attempts to overcome religious men and women, than to conquer all the rest of worldly men; and if one of these religious fall, all hell exerts the greatest solicitude and care to prevent his using the many means which religion affords for rising from a fall, such as obedience and holy exercises and the frequent use of the Sacraments. To make all these remedies miscarry and be of no use to the fallen religious, the enemy applies so many cunning snares that it would fill with terror any one who saw them. However, much of this is recognized in the actions and artifices by which a lax religious soul tries to defend its remissness, excusing it by specious arguments, if it does not break out in disobedience and yet greater disorders and faults.

442. Be careful therefore, my daughter, and fear so dreadful a danger; by divine assistance of grace raise thyself above thyself, never permitting thy will to consent to any disorderly affection or movement. I wish thee to consume thyself in dying to thy passions and in becoming entirely spiritualized, so that having extinguished within thee all that is of earth, thou mayest come to lead an angelic life and conversation. In order to deserve the name of spouse of Christ, thou must pass beyond the limits and the sphere of a human being and ascend to another state and divine existence. Although thou art earth, thou must be a blessed earth, without the thorns of

passion, one whose fruit is all for the Lord, its Master. If thou hast for thy Spouse that supreme and mighty Lord, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, consider it beneath thy dignity to turn thy eyes, and much more thy heart, toward such vile slaves, as are the human creatures, for even the angels love and respect thee for thy dignity as spouse of the Most High. If even among men it is held to be a daring and boundless insolence in a plebeian to cast longing eyes upon the spouse of a prince, what a crime would it be to cast them on the spouse of the heavenly and omnipotent King? And it would not be a smaller crime if she herself would receive and consent to such familiarity. Consider and assure thyself that the punishment reserved for this sin is inconceivably terrible and I do not show it to thee visibly, lest thou perish in thy weakness. I wish that for thee my instructions suffice to urge thee to the fulfillment of all I admonish and to imitate me as my disciple, as far as thy powers go. Be also solicitous in recalling this instruction to the mind of thy nuns and in seeing that they live up to it.

443. My Mistress and my most kind Queen, in the joy of my soul I listen to thy sweetest words, so full of spirit and of life, and I wish to inscribe them in the interior of my heart together with the graces of thy most holy Son, which I beseech thee to obtain for me. If Thou give me permission I will speak in thy presence as an ignorant disciple with her Mistress and Teacher. I desire, O my Mother and Protectress, though I am so unworthy and remiss, to fulfill the four vows of my profession according to thy commands and according to my obligation, though I am so unworthy and remiss therein; yet I beseech Thee, give me a more full instruction, which may serve me as a guide and direction in the fulfillment of this duty and as a complement of these vows, which Thou hast placed in my heart.

CHAPTER III.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME CONCERNING THE VOWS OF MY PROFESSION.

444. My dear daughter, I will not deny thee the instruction thou askest of me with the desire of putting it into practice; but do thou receive it with an appreciative and devout mind, ready to follow it in deed. The wise man says: "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger, thou art ensnared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy own words" (Prov. 6, 1). Accordingly he who has made vows to God has bound his own will; so that he has no freedom of acting except according to the will and direction of Him to whom he has bound himself; for he is chained down by the words of his own mouth uttered in the profession of his vows. Before taking his vows, the choice of his ways was in his own hands; but having once bound and obliged himself, let him know that he has entirely lost his liberty and had delivered himself up to God in his superiors. The whole ruin or salvation of souls depends upon the use of their free will; but since most men use it ill and damn themselves, the Most High has established religious life under the sacred vows. Thus the creature, by once using its liberty to make a perfect and prudent choice, can deliver up to his Majesty that very liberty, which so many pervert, if it remains free and unhampered in its choice.

445. By these vows the liberty to do evil is happily lost, and the liberty for doing good is assured. It is like

a bridle, which leads away from danger and directs into the smooth and sure road. The soul is freed from the slavery and subjection of the passions, and acquires a new power over them, resuming her place as mistress and queen in the government of her kingdom and remaining subject only to the law of grace and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. If she thus applies her whole will solely to the fulfillment of all that she has promised to God, the holy Spirit will govern and direct all her operations. The creature thereby passes from the condition and state of a slave to that of a child of the Most High, from an earthly to an angelic life, while the corruption and evil effects of sin cannot exert their full power. It is impossible that thou ever be able in this earthly life to calculate or comprehend, what and how many are the blessings and treasures those souls gather for themselves, who with all their powers and affection strive to fulfill perfectly the vows of their profession. For I assure thee, my dearest, that those who are perfect and punctual in their religious obligations can equal and even surpass the martyrs in merit.

446. My daughter, thou didst happily begin to gather these blessings on the day when thou didst choose the better part; but remember well that thou hast bound thyself to the eternal and mighty God, to whom the inmost secrets of thy heart are manifest. If it is so base and detestable to deceive and disappoint men in just promises, how vile is it to be unfaithful to God in the most just and holy promises? As thy Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, He claims thy gratitude; as Father, thy reverence; as Spouse, thy fidelity; as a Friend, amicable intercourse; as the most Faithful, He should excite thy faith and hope; as the highest and eternal Good, He should possess thy love; as the Almighty, thy entire subjection; as the

most just Judge, He should rouse thy humble and holy fear. Against all these allegiances and many others thou committest perfidious treason, in failing or hesitating to fulfill what thou hast promised according to thy profession. And if in all the nuns who have obliged themselves to a spiritual life and conversation, it is such a monstrous and terrible abomination to call themselves spouses of Christ, while living as members and slaves of the devil, how much more abominable will it be in thee, who hast received more than they all, and therefore shouldst exceed them in loving and exerting thyself to make a return for such incomparable blessings and benefits.

447. Consider, O soul, how detestable this fault would make thee in the sight of the Lord, of myself, and of the angels and saints. For we all are witnesses of the love and fidelity, which He has shown toward thee as a generous, loving and faithful Spouse. Strive then with all thy heart to avoid offending Him either in great or in small things; do not force Him to relinquish thee and to deliver thee over to the beastly disorders of sin; for thou knowest that this would be a greater misfortune and punishment than if He consign thee to the fury of the elements, or to the wrath of all the wild animals, or even to the rage of the demons. If all these were to execute their anger upon thee, and if the world were to heap upon thee all its punishments and insults, all would do thee less damage than one venial sin against the God whom thou art obliged to serve and love in all things and through all things. Any punishment of this life is less dreadful than sin; for it ends with mortal life, but the guilt of sin, and with it punishment, may be eternal.

448. In this life any punishment or tribulation fills mortals with fear and dread, merely because it affects the senses and brings them in close touch with it through

them, but the guilt of sin does not affect them nor fill them with dread. Men are entirely taken up by that which is visible, and they therefore do not look upon the ultimate consequences of sin, which is the eternal punishment of hell. Though this is imbibed and inseparably connected with sin, the human heart becomes so heavy and remiss that it remains as if it were stupefied in its wickedness, because it does not feel it present in its senses. Though it could see and feel it by faith, this itself remains listless and dead, as if it were wanting entirely. O most unhappy blindness of mortals! O torpid negligence, that holds so many souls, capable of reason and of glory, oppressed in deceit! There are not words or sentences sufficient to describe this terrible and tremendous danger. My daughter, haste away, and fly with holy fear such an unhappy state, and deliver thyself up to all the troubles and torments of life, which pass soon, rather than incur such a danger; for nothing will be wanting to thee, if thou do not lose God. To be convinced that there are no small faults for thee and for thy state, is a powerful means of saving thyself; fear greatly the small things, for in despising small faults the Most High knows, that the human heart invites other greater ones. That is not a blameless love, which does not avoid all displeasure of the beloved one.

449. The order which religious souls should maintain in their desires should be: that they strive to be punctual in fulfilling the obligations of their vows and all the virtues, which are connected with them. Afterwards and secondarily they may engage in voluntary practices, such as are called supererogatory. This order some of the souls, who are misled by the devil to entertain an indiscreet zeal for perfection, are wont to invert; thus, while they fail seriously in the obligations of their state, they

are eager to add other voluntary exercises and practices, which are usually of small use or benefit, or arise from a spirit of presumption and singularity. They secretly desire to be looked upon as distinguished in zeal and perfection, while in truth they are very far even from the beginning of perfection. I do not wish to see in thee a fault so reprehensible: but first fulfill all the duties of thy vows and of community life, and then thou mayest add what thou canst, according to thy ability and the inspiration of divine grace. This together will beautify thy soul and will make it perfect and agreeable in the eyes of God.

450. The vow of obedience is the principal one in religion; for it implies a total renunciation and denial of one's will. By it the religious renounces all jurisdiction or right to say for himself: I will or I will not, I shall or I shall not act: all this he throws aside and renounces by obedience, delivering himself into the hands of his superior. In order to fulfill this obligation it is necessary for thee not to be wise in thy own conceit, not to imagine thyself still mistress of thy likings, thy desires, or thy opinion; for true obedience must be of the quality of faith, so that the commands of the superior are esteemed, reverenced and put into execution, without any pretense of examination or criticism. Accordingly, in order to obey, thou must consider thyself without opinion, without life of thy own, without right of speech; but thou must allow thyself to be moved and governed like a corpse, alive only in order to execute devotedly all that the superior desires. Never discuss within thyself whether thou shouldst fulfill his commands or not, but only consider how thou canst best execute that which is commanded. Sacrifice thy own inclination and repress all thy appetites and passions; and when by this efficacious determination thou art dead to

all the movements of self, let obedience be the soul and the life of thy works. To the will of thy superior thou must conform all thy own, with all its activity in all thy words and works; let it be thy prayer, to be able to quit thy own being and receive another new one, so that nothing be thine and all in thee be of obedience without contradiction or resistance.

451. Remember that the most perfect manner of obeying is to avoid offending the superior by showing that you disagree with him. He should find a willing obedience, convincing him that his commands are obeyed promptly, without objection or murmur, either in words or by any other signs. The superiors take the place of God, and he who obeys his superiors, obeys the Lord himself, who is in them and governs them and enlightens them, so that their commands will be for the salvation of souls. The contempt shown to superiors passes on to God himself, who through them manifests and makes known his will (Luke 10, 16). Thou must persuade thyself, that the Lord moves them to speak, and that it is the word of the Omnipotent himself. My daughter, strive to be obedient in order that thou mayest speak of victories (Prov. 21, 28); do not fear to obey, for that is the secure path; so secure, that God will not bring to account the errors of the obedient on the day of judgment, but He will rather blot out other sins in consideration of the sacrifice made in obedience. My most holy Son offered his precious sufferings and death in special love for the obedient, and procured for them special rights in regard to mercy and grace, and special privileges toward the success and perfection of all that is due under obedience. Even now, in order to appease Him, He reminds the eternal Father of his obedience unto death and unto the cross (Phil. 2, 8), and so the Father is placated toward men. Because He

was pleased with the obedience of Abraham and his son Isaac, He held Himself obliged not only to save Isaac from death, who showed himself so obedient, but to make him the ancestor of the incarnate Word and to designate him as the head and beginning of the great blessings.

452. The vow of poverty is a generous renunciation and detachment from the heavy burden of temporal things. It is an alleviation of the spirit, it is a relief afforded to human infirmity, the liberty of a noble heart to strive after eternal and spiritual blessings. It is a satiety and abundance, in which the thirst after earthly treasures is allayed, and a sovereignty and ownership, in which a most noble enjoyment of all riches is established. All this, my daughter, and many other blessings are contained in voluntary poverty, and all this the sons of the world are ignorant and deprived of, precisely because they are lovers of earthly riches and enemies of this holy and opulent poverty. They do not consider, although they feel and suffer, the heavy weight of riches, which pins them to the earth and drives them into its very bowels to seek gold and silver in great anxiety, sleeplessness, labors and sweat, as if they were not men, but wild beasts that know not what they are suffering and doing. And if they are thus weighed down before acquiring riches, how much more when they have come into their possession? Let the countless hosts that have fallen into hell with their burden, proclaim it; let their incalculable anxieties of preserving their riches, and much more, let the intolerable laws, which riches and those that possess them have foisted upon the world, testify what is required to retain them!

453. If, on the one hand, possessions throttle the spirit and tyrannically oppress it in its weakness, if they suppress the soul's most noble privilege of following eternal goods and God himself: it is certain on the other hand, that vol-

untary poverty restores to man the nobility of his condition and, liberating him from vile servitude and reinstating him his noble freedom and mastery of all things. The soul is never more a mistress than when she despises them, and only then has she the more firm possession and makes the more excellent use of riches, when she gives them away or leaves them of her own free will; only then her appetite for them is best satiated, when she does not care to possess them. Then above all is the heart set free and made capable of the treasures of the Divinity, for which it is furnished by the Creator with almost infinite capacity.

454. My daughter, I wish thee to study diligently this divine philosophy and science, which the world forgets, and not only the world, but also many religious souls, who have promised it to God. Great is the divine wrath on account of this fault, and suddenly will the infringers of this vow receive heavy and unexpected punishment. By setting aside their voluntary poverty, they have alienated from themselves the spirit of Christ, my most holy Son, and all that We have come to teach men in abnegation and poverty. Although they do not now feel it, because the Judge delays and they enjoy the abundance which they desire, yet in the judgment they will find themselves overwhelmed and dismayed by the rigor of their punishment, greater than they ever expected, considered or imagined in their forgetfulness of divine justice.

455. The temporal goods are created by the Most High for the sole purpose of sustaining life; having attained this end, the need of them ceases. And as this need is limited, soon and easily satisfied, there is no reason that the care for the immortal soul should be only fitful and temporary, while the hunger after riches should be so perpetual and unintermitting, as it has come to be among men. It is the height of perverseness for man to mix up the end

and the means in an affair so important and urgent, that he devote all his time, all his care, all the exertion of his powers and all the alertness of his mind to the life of his body, of which he knows not the duration nor the end, and that on the other hand, in many years of his existence he spare for his poor soul only one hour, and that very often the last and the worst one of his whole life.

456. Make use therefore, my dearest daughter, of the true enlightenment, by which the Most High has undeceived thee in regard to such a dangerous error. Renounce all affection or inclination for earthly things; even under the pretext of the necessity and poverty of thy convent do not be oversolicitous to procure the things used for the sustenance of life. In exerting ordinary care, let it be such as will not disturb thee, when thou failest to obtain what thou desirest, and let it be without inordinate affection, even when thou seekest it for the service of God: for thou must know, that thy love of God shall be so much the less, as the number of things thou lovest together with Him is greater. Great possessions thou must renounce as superfluous; thou dost not need them and it is a crime to keep them for no purpose; the little thou standst in need of should also be esteemed but little; for it would be a great error to embarrass the heart with that which is of no account and can hinder it much. If thou hast all that according to thy judgment is necessary for human wants, thou art not in reality poor; for to be poor properly and strictly means to have less than what is necessary. Those, to whom nothing is wanting, call themselves rich. To possess more than is necessary creates unrest and affliction of spirit; to desire and look for what is not used will be a poverty without quiet or satisfaction.

457. I require of thee such a freedom of spirit, as not to attach thyself to anything, be it great or small, super-

fluous or necessary. Of the things that are necessary for human life, accept only so much, as is needed to prevent death or indecency. Let this latter be of the poorest and of such as is patched up sufficient to cover thee, and in thy nourishment seek what is most coarse, without satisfying thy particular whims of taste, but asking for what is insipid and tasteless, so that on purpose thou mayst be served with what is disagreeable and be deprived of what the appetite craves, thus seeking in all things the greatest perfection.

458. The vow of chastity includes purity of body and soul; this is easily lost, and it is difficult, sometimes, according to the manner of losing it, even impossible to repair. This great treasure is deposited in a castle, which has many portals and openings, and if these are not all well guarded and defended, the treasure is without security. My daughter, in order to preserve perfectly this vow, it is necessary to make an inviolable pact with thy senses, not to use them, except for what is according to the dictates of reason and for the glory of the Creator. After once the senses are mortified, it will be easy to overcome thy enemies, for only through them can they conquer thee; for no thoughts can recur, or be awakened to activity, unless fomented and excited by the images and impressions admitted through the exterior senses. Thou shouldst not touch, nor look upon, nor speak to any person of whatever condition, whether man or woman, so as to let their images or resemblances find entrance into thy imagination. This carefulness, which I enjoin, will be the guard of the purity, which I require of thee. If on account of charity or obedience thou must converse with them (for only these virtues are sufficient causes for conversing with creatures), do it with all gravity, modesty and reserve.

459. In regard to thy own person live as if thou wert

a pilgrim and stranger in this world; be poor, mortified, laborious, loving the hardship connected with temporal things, without expecting alleviation or enjoyment, as one who is absent from her home and her country, enlisted to work and battle against powerful foes. Since the flesh is the center of weakness and danger, it is proper that thou carefully resist thy natural likings, and through them the temptations of the demons. Raise thyself above thyself, and seek a habitation far above all that is earthly in order that thou mayest live under the shadow of Him, whom thou desirest (Cant. 2, 3) and in his protection thou shalt enjoy tranquillity and true refreshment. Deliver thyself over with thy whole heart to his chaste and holy love, without attending to any creatures, except in so far as they may help and oblige thee to love and serve thy Creator; in all other respects abhor them.

460. Although no virtue should be wanting in her, who professes herself, and is entitled to call herself, a spouse of Christ; yet it is the virtue of chastity which makes her most worthy and like to her Spouse. For it is chastity, which makes her spiritual and withdraws her from earthly corruption, elevating her to angelic life and to a certain resemblance of God himself. This virtue beautifies and adorns all the rest, raises the body to a higher existence, enlightens the mind and preserves in the soul a nobility above all that is corruptible. Because this virtue was in an especial fruit of the Redemption, merited by my Son on the Cross, where He paid for the sins of the world, therefore holy Scripture expressly mentions that virgins accompany and follow the Lamb (Apoc. 14, 4).

461. The vow of enclosure is the wall of chastity and of all virtues, the preserve where they are nourished and expanded: it is a privilege granted by heaven to the spouses of Christ in religion, dispensing them from the burdensome and dangerous tribute, which the freedom of the

world pays to the ruler of its vanities. By this vow the religious live as in a secure port, while other souls navigate and are tossed about in the storms of a dangerous sea. With so many advantages enclosure cannot be considered as a confinement in a narrow space, for in it are offered to the religious the spacious fields of virtue, of the knowledge of God, of his infinite perfections, of his mysteries, and of his benefits conferred on man. On such spacious grounds can a nun, recreate and enjoy herself; and only when she fails in this enjoyment, does she begin to feel narrow confinement in this, the greatest freedom. For thee, my daughter, let there be no other playground, nor do I wish to see thee confine thyself to so narrow limits as even the whole visible world. Rise up to the height of the knowledge and love of God, where there are no limits or confines to hold thee, and where thou canst live in unbounded liberty. From that eminence thou wilt see how small, vile and despicable is all that is created, and how much too narrow it is to hold thy soul.

462. To the necessary enclosure of the body add also the restrictions of the senses, in order that, imbued with fortitude, they may preserve for thee interior purity, and through it keep ablaze the fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6, 12) which thou must continue to nourish and watch lest it be extinguished. In order to better guard the senses and profit from the vow of enclosure, do not approach the portals, nor the speaking-grate, nor the windows, and do not even remember that the convent is furnished therewith, unless it is required by some particular office or by obedience. Desire nothing, and therefore strive after nothing, and do not exert thyself for that, which is not allowed thee to desire. In retirement, solitude and circumspection wilt thou find thy peace. Thereby wilt thou give me pleasure, and merit for thyself copious fruit and the reward of love and grace, which thou desirest.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE PERFECTION IN WHICH MOST HOLY MARY PASSED HER DAYS IN THE TEMPLE, AND OF THE EXERCISES WHICH SHE WAS ORDERED TO UNDERTAKE.

463. Let us now return to our heavenly narrative. After the most holy Child had begun to consecrate the temple by her holy presence and daily life, She grew from day to day in wisdom and grace, before God and before men. The understanding which was given me of that, which the powerful hand of God proceeded to work in the heavenly Princess during these years, place me as it were at the shore of a vast and unmeasured sea, leaving me lost in astonishment and doubt as to how I am to embark on such an immense ocean for the destined port. For I am forced to leave much unsaid, and it is difficult to describe even the smallest part. I will relate that, which the Most High explained to me on one occasion in his own words:

464. "The works of Her, who was to be the Mother of the Godman, were altogether and in every way most perfect, and even to understand them exceeds the capacity of all human creatures and of the angels. Her interior acts of the virtues were so precious and of such great merit and favor, that they surpass all that the seraphim can do; and thou, my soul, wilt much better understand, than be able to explain them with words of thy tongue. But it is my will, that during thy pilgrimage in thy mortal body thou place most holy Mary as the beginning of thy joy, and that thou follow Her through the desert of re-

nunciation and abnegation of all that is human and visible. Follow Her by a perfect imitation according to the measure of thy strength and of the light which thou receivest. Let Her be thy guiding star and thy Directress: She will manifest to thee my will and will let thee find my holy law which is written in Her by the power of my right hand: meditate upon it day and night. She by her intercession will strike the rock of Christ's humanity (Num. 20, 11), in order that in this desert may abound the waters of divine grace and light, so that thy thirst may be quenched, thy understanding enlightened, and thy will inflamed. She will be a pillar of light to illuminate thy path (Exod. 13, 21) and a cloud to afford thee shade and refreshment against the ardors of thy passions and the fierceness of thy enemies."

465. "Thou wilt have in Her an angel, who will guard and guide thee, and (Exod. 23, 21) lead thee away from the dangers of Babylon and of Sodom, so that my punishment shall not reach thee. Thou wilt have in Her a Mother to love thee, a Friend to counsel thee, a Mistress to direct thee, a Protectress to shield thee and a Queen whom thou canst serve and obey as a handmaid. In the virtues, which this Mother of the Onlybegotten exercised in the temple, thou wilt find a summary of all the highest perfections according to which thou shouldst arrange thy life; an exact and reliable copy of all her sanctity; the beauty of virginity, the loveliness of humility, the utmost promptness in devotion and obedience, the steadfastness of faith, the certitude of hope, the fire of love and the most complete outline map of all the wonders of my right hand. According to this rule thou must regulate thy life, by this mirror thou must arrange and adorn it, adding to the beauty and grace of a bride that wishes to enter into the chamber of her Spouse and Lord."

466. "If the nobility and condition of the teacher are a spur to the disciple and tend to make his doctrine more acceptable, who can attract thee more powerfully than thy Instructress, who is the Mother of thy Spouse, chosen as the most pure and holy among women, and without blemish of sin, being at the same time a Virgin and the Mother of the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father, the splendor of his Divinity in his own essence? Hear then this sovereign Mistress; follow Her in close imitation, and meditate without ceasing upon her admirable excellence and virtues. Remember, that the life and conversation She led in the temple is the original, which all the souls, that consecrate themselves after Her as spouses of Christ, must copy within themselves." The above is the explanation and instruction, which the Most High gave me in outline concerning the life and conduct of the most holy Mary in the temple.

467. But let us proceed now to a more particular description of her actions. After the vision of the Divinity, described in the second chapter, after She had offered Herself entirely to the Lord and delivered up to her instructress all that She possessed, being thus deprived of all, entirely bound over to obedience, and hiding, beneath the veil of these virtues, treasures of grace and wisdom greater than that of the seraphim, She requested the priest and her teacher to prescribe for Her an order of life and to direct Her in the occupations, which She was to assume. The priest and her instructress, having together considered her petition with the aid of a special enlightenment from on high and desiring to regulate from now on the exercises of this heavenly Child of only three years, called Her to their presence. The Princess of heaven remained kneeling before them during this interview and, although they bade Her rise, She begged most humbly to

be allowed to remain in this reverent position in the presence of the minister and priest of the Most High and of her teacher, on account of their office and dignity.

468. The priest spoke to Her and said: "My Daughter, as a very young Child the Lord has drawn Thee to his house and holy temple; be thankful for this favor and seek to profit by it by striving hard to serve Him in truth and with an upright heart. Acquire all the virtues, in order that thou mayest return from this holy place prepared and fortified against the troubles and the dangers of this world. Obey thy Mistress Anne and commence early to bear the sweet yoke of virtue, in order that thou mayest find it more easy to bear during the rest of thy life" (Thren. 3, 27). The sovereign Child answered: "Do thou, my master, who art the minister and priest of God and holdest his place, and thou my Mistress together with him, command and instruct me in whatever I am to do so that I may not commit any fault: this I beg of you, wishing to obey you in all things."

469. The priest and her teacher Anne felt within themselves a great enlightenment and a divine impulse to attend especially to this heavenly Child and to care for Her more than the other maidens. Conferring with themselves about this great esteem, with which they had been inspired, though ignorant of the mystery by which it came to them, they resolved to devote particular attention to her guidance and assistance. But as their care could extend only to the exterior and visible actions, they were far from suspecting the interior acts and inspirations of her heart, for over these the Most High watched with singular protection and favor. Thus the pure heart of the Princess of heaven remained free to advance and grow in interior vision, without losing one instant, in which She did not reach what is highest and most excellent in virtue.

470. The priest also gave Her a rule for her occupations and said: "My Daughter thou wilt assist at the exercises of divine praise and song in honor of the Lord with all reverence and devotion, and always pray to the Most High for the necessities of his holy temple and of his people, and for the coming of the Messias. At eight o'clock thou wilt retire for sleep and at the beginning of dawn thou wilt arise in order to praise the Lord until the third hour (this hour corresponds to our nine o'clock in the morning). From the third hour until evening thou wilt occupy thyself in some manual works, in order that thou mayest be instructed in all things. At meals, of which thou wilt partake after thy exercise, observe befitting moderation. Then thou wilt go to hear the instructions of thy teacher; the rest of the day thou wilt engage thyself in the reading of holy Scriptures, and in all things be humble, affable, and obedient to the commands of thy instructress."

471. The most holy Child remained on her knees, while She listened to the words of the priest and then asked his blessing; having kissed his hand and the hand of her mistress, She proposed in her heart to observe the order of life assigned Her during her stay in the temple and as long as they should not command her otherwise. And She, who was the Mistress of sanctity, fulfilled their orders as if She were the least of all the scholars. Her desires and her most ardent love impelled Her to many other external exercises, which they had not included in their orders; but with regard to these She subjected Herself to the minister of the Lord, preferring the sacrifice of a perfect and holy obedience to the high dictates of her own fervor. She knew, as Mistress of all perfection, that the divine will is more surely fulfilled by the humble acquiescence of obedience, than in following the highest aspira-

tions to other virtues. By this rare example let souls, and especially those in the religious state, learn not to follow their own effervescences and whims contrary to obedience and the will of their superiors; for in the latter God makes known to us his desire and pleasure, whereas in the former we seek only our own fancies; in the superiors God himself operates, in ourselves (if we work contrary to their orders), temptations, blind passion and deceit is active.

472. In the performance of works not commanded Her our Queen and Lady distinguished Herself from other maidens by asking her teacher to be allowed to serve them all and be engaged in the humble occupation of scrubbing and cleaning the rooms and of washing the dishes. Although this seemed extraordinary, especially in one of the firstborn children, who were treated with greater consideration and respect, yet the incomparable humility of the heavenly Princess could not be restrained or confined by any consideration of what was due to her position, but reached out for the most humble occupations. With such an eager humility She knew how to gain time and opportunity for doing such work, that She was beforehand in assuming the tasks of others. By means of her infused science She understood all the mysteries and ceremonies of the temple; but She was anxious to learn them also by study and practice, as if She were ignorant of them, nor did She ever fail in any ceremony or duty, no matter how small. She was most eager for humiliation and most submissive in her selfcontempt; every morning and evening She asked the blessing of her teacher and kissed her hand, and the same She did whenever She was ordered or was permitted to perform works of humility. Sometimes, when it was allowed Her, She kissed her feet with profound humility.

473. The sovereign Princess was so docile, so sweet and friendly in her actions, so ready to serve and so eager and diligent in humbling Herself, so anxious to show kindness and esteem toward all the maidens in the temple, obeying them as if each had been Her Mistress, that She ravished all the hearts. By Her ineffable and heavenly prudence She proceeded in all her actions in such a manner, that She never lost an occasion for engaging in lowly work, in humble service of her companions, and in the fulfillment of the divine pleasure.

474. But what shall I, most vile creature, and what shall all faithful children of the Catholic Church think, when describing and considering such a vivid example of humility? It seems to us great virtue, when the inferior obeys the superior, the lowly yields to the exalted; and we esteem it a great humility, that the equal submit to his equal. But when the inferior commands and the superior obeys, when the Queen humbles Herself before her slave, when the most holy and the most perfect of all creatures submits to a mere wormlet, the Queen of heaven and earth to the least of women, and when this is done with all her heart and in all sincerity: who is not astonished and confounded in his vapid pride? Who will not see, as in a clear mirror, his unhappy presumption? Who can convince himself, that he knows what true humility is, much less exercise it, when he sees it exhibited, in its reality and in its own element, the most holy Mary? Let us souls, who live under the vow of obedience, approach this light in order to perceive and correct the disorders, which show themselves, whenever obedience to our god-given superiors requires renouncement of our whims and therefore becomes hard and troublesome. Here let our hardness be crushed, let the proudest humiliate herself and be confounded in her shameful pride; let her banish all presumption and let her not account herself obe-

dient and humble, because on certain occasions she has yielded to the superiors, for she is yet far from thinking herself inferior and beneath her companion, as Mary did, who is superior to all.

475. The beauty, grace, elegance and courteousness of our Queen were incomparable; for all the natural graces and gifts, which were hers in a most perfect degree, were re-enforced by the splendor of supernatural or divine grace, and effected a marvelous union of grace and beauty in all her being and activity, enthralling all in love and admiration of Her. Divine Providence moderated the outward demonstrations of this affection, which those who conversed with Her, would have shown, if they had been left to the natural force of their spontaneous love of the Queen. In eating and in sleep, as in all other virtues, She was most perfect: She observed the measure dictated by temperance; never did She exceed, nor could She, rather She deducted from the necessary. Although her curtailed sleep did not interrupt her high contemplation, as I have said before (No. 352), yet She would have gladly omitted it altogether; in virtue of obedience however, She retired to rest at the time appointed, and on her humble and poor couch, strewn with the flowers of virtue (Cant. 1, 15) and surrounded by the seraphim and the angelic host who guarded and assisted Her, She enjoyed more exalted contemplation (outside of beatific vision), and more ardent ecstasies of love, than all of them together.

476. She divided her time and applied it with rare prudence so as to give to each of her actions and occupations its proper share. She read much in the sacred writings of the ancients and, by means of her infused science, She was so well versed in them and in all their profound mysteries, that none of them was unfamiliar to Her; for the Most High made known to Her all their mysteries and sacraments; She treated and conversed about them in her

conferences with the holy angels of her guard, familiarizing Herself with them and asking about them with incomparable intelligence and great acuteness. If this sovereign Mistress had written what She understood, we would have many other additions to the sacred Scriptures; and we would be able to draw out of them a perfect understanding of those writings and the deep meanings and mysteries of all those preserved in the Church. All the plenitude of this science She utilized for the worship, praise and love of God: to this She applied all knowledge without allowing one ray of her divine enlightenment to remain sterile or idle. She was most subtile in discourse, most profound in her intelligence, most exalted and loving in her thoughts, most prudent in her choice and arrangement, most efficacious and sweet in her operations, and in all things She was a most perfect example and an object of admiration for men and angels, and even, in a way, for the Lord himself, who had formed Her altogether according to his heart and pleasure.

INSTRUCTION OF THE SOVEREIGN MISTRESS.

477. My daughter, human nature is imperfect and remiss in practicing virtue, and easily weakens in its exercise; for it continually seeks rest and evades labor with all its might. When the soul listens to and extemporizes with the animal and carnal part of its nature this latter will engross and overcome the forces of reason and of the spirit, and will reduce them to a dangerous and shameful slavery. This disorder is abominable and much to be feared by all; but God abhors it without comparison more in his ministers and in religious: they, as a matter of course, are supposed to be perfect, and therefore are injured so much the more seriously, if they do not come out victorious in the conflict of the passions. By remissness in battle and by their frequent defeats they live themselves into a paralyz-

ing and self-satisfied conviction of false security, content with the performance of certain easy outward practices of virtue, at the same time imagining (without the least real advancement) that they are moving mountains. The demon then introduces other distractions and temptations, and on account of their small appreciation of the rules and practices of religion, they begin to weaken in all of them, esteem them as light and unimportant matter, and, living on in their false security, come to lose the very perception of true virtue.

478. I desire that thou, my daughter, guard against this error. Remember, that a voluntary remissness in regard to one imperfection prepares and opens the way for others: these facilitate the commission of venial sins, these again of mortal sins. Thus the descent is from one abyss to another, until the bottom is found in the disregard of all evil. In order to prevent such a misfortune it is necessary to intercept from afar the current of sin, for the practice or ceremony, which seems but small, is an outwork which keeps the enemy at a distance, while the precepts and laws concerning more important matters are the fortress walls of conscience. If the demon can break through and gain the outer defenses, he is in better position to gain the inner ones. If then an opening is made in the bulwarks by the commission of sin, although it may not be a very grievous one, he already has a better opportunity to make an assault on the interior reign of a soul. As the soul finds herself weakened by vicious acts and habits and without strength of grace, she does not resist the attack with fortitude, and the devil, acquiring more and more power over her, begins to subject and oppress her without opposition.

479. Consider therefore now, my dearest, how great must be thy watchfulness, and how great is the necessity of not falling asleep in the midst of so many dangers. Re-

member that thou art a religious, a spouse of Christ, a superior, taught and enlightened, favored with so many singular blessings. By these privileges and many others, which thou wilt find connected with them, thou shouldst gage thy solicitude, for thou owest a return and correspondence in all of them to the Lord. Exert thyself to be punctual in the fulfillment of all the rules and practices of religion; let there be no rule, no command, and no exercise of perfection, which ever will seem small to thee; despise or forget none of them; observe them all with rigor, for in the eyes of God all is precious and of great import when practiced according to his pleasure. It is certain, that He finds pleasure in seeing his commands fulfilled, and is offended in seeing them set aside. Therefore in all things consider, that thou hast a Spouse, whom thou must please, a God, whom thou must serve, a Father, whom thou must obey, a Judge, whom thou must fear, and a Mistress, whom thou shouldst imitate and follow.

480. In order that thou mayest fulfill all this, thou must renew in thy soul the strong resolution not to listen to thy inclinations, not to yield to the negligence and weakness of thy nature; do not omit any practice or exercise on account of its difficulty, as for instance kissing the ground, as thou has been accustomed to do according to the custom of the religious. Both small and great perform with a loving constancy and thus thou wilt be pleasing in the eyes of my Son and myself. In the works of supererogation, after praying for a holy alacrity, ask advice of thy confessor and superior, and perform them with a spirit entirely free of any predilection or selflove. That which they direct, accept and write in thy heart, never resting in its punctual fulfillment. If it is possible to avail thyself of obedience and counsel, never decide for thyself on anything, how good soever it may appear to thee; for the true will of God is always manifest in holy obedience.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE PERFECTIONS OF THE MOST HOLY MARY IN THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUES IN GENERAL, AND OF HER ADVANCE IN THEM.

481. Virtue is a habit, which ennobles and adorns the rational powers of the creature, and inclines it toward doing good. It is called a habit, because it is a quality which is permanently connected with the faculties from which it is not so easily separated, thereby differing from a virtuous act, which does not remain, but passes away. It creates an alertness and facility of action tending toward the good; this quality is not inherent in the faculty itself, for these faculties are indifferent toward good or evil. Most holy Mary was adorned from the first instant of her life with all virtues in a most eminent degree, and they were continually augmented by new graces and by new perfection in practice. All the virtues and merits, which the hand of the Lord had showered upon Her, She brought to their fullest perfection.

482. Although the faculties of this Lady and sovereign Princess were in no sense subject to disorder, nor to any of the repugnance, which other children of Adam must first overcome (for sin had not touched Her, nor the leaven of sin, which draws toward evil and resists the good); yet, by virtuous habits, these already well ordered faculties were capable of being inclined more and more to what was most perfect, holy and praiseworthy. Moreover She was a mere creature capable of suffering, and as such She was also subject to pain, to the inclination toward licit repose, and to the inertia, disinclining Her

toward the performance of some supererogatory works, which without sin She could have omitted. In order to overcome this natural disinclination and repugnance habits of the most exalted virtues assisted Her, so that this Queen of heaven vanquished them without any weakness and was in no way hindered in pursuing the utmost perfection in all her works.

483. On account of this beauty and harmony regarding the habits of virtue, the soul of the most holy Mary was so enlightened, ennobled and entirely bent on the highest Good and last End of all creation; so alert, prompt, efficient and joyful in the practice of virtue, that, if it were possible for our weak insight to penetrate into the interior of her sacred soul, we would there find a more wonderful beauty than that of all creatures combined and inferior only to that of God himself. All the perfection of creatures were in purest Mary as if in their own sphere and center, and all virtues reached in Her the highest perfection, so that in no manner could it ever be said of Her: this or that is wanting in order to make Her altogether beautiful and perfect. Besides the infused virtues, She possessed all the acquired ones, which She augmented by practice and exercise. In other souls, one single act cannot be called virtue, because many repeated acts are necessary to constitute virtue; but in the most holy Mary each act was so efficacious, intense and consummate, that each one was superior to the virtues of all the other creatures. Accordingly, as her acts of virtue were so frequent and did not fall short in the least point of the highest degree of perfection, how incomparably excellent were not the habits of virtue, which the heavenly Mistress attained by her personal exertion? The end for which something is done is that which makes an act virtuous as being well done. In Mary, our Mistress, this end was God himself,

highest possible end of all activity; for She did nothing through which She was not certain to advance the greater glory and pleasure of the Lord and She looked upon this as the motive and ultimate end of all her actions.

484. The two kinds of virtues, the infused and the acquired, are founded upon a third kind, called natural virtue; this is born within us as part of our rational nature and is called synteresis. It is a certain knowledge of the first foundations and principles of virtue, perceived by the light of reason, and a certain inclination in the will, corresponding to this light. Such for instance is the sentiment, that we must love those who do us good, or that we should not do unto others, what we do not wish to be done to ourselves, etc. The most holy Queen possessed this natural virtue or synteresis in the most superlative degree, so that from the natural principles She drew all their consequences and relations up to the universal Good, though ever so remote; for She reasoned from these first principles with profoundest insight, and incredible swiftness and accuracy. To arrive at these conclusions, She availed Herself of her infused knowledge of created things, especially of the more noble and vast ones, of the heavens, the sun, the moon and stars, the arrangement of all the heavenly bodies and of the elements. Taking in their whole scope from beginning to end, She invited these creatures to praise their Creator and commanded them, as far as was in them, to raise and draw men toward their God until they should arrive at the knowledge of the Creator and Author of all.

485. The infused virtues are divided into two classes. To the first belong only those, that have God himself for their immediate object; therefore they are called theological virtues, being faith, hope, and charity. To the second class belong all those other virtues, which have as their

proximate object some means or some honorable good, which advances the soul toward its last end, namely God. These are called the moral virtues, because they are intimately connected with established customs, and, although they are many in number, they can be reduced to four, which are called the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Of all these virtues and their different species I will say farther on as much as I can in order that I may make clear, how all of them and each one in particular adorned the faculties of the most holy Mary. At present I only mention in general, that none of them was wanting in Her, and that all were possessed by Her in the most perfect manner; moreover they were supplemented by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the fruits of the Spirit, and the Beatitudes. God did not fail to infuse into Her from the first moment of her Conception, all of the graces and gifts conducive to the highest beauty of the human soul and faculties; and this was true of the will as well as of the understanding, so that She had as well the knowledge as the habit of the sciences. In order to say it all in one word: all the good, which the Most High could give Her as the Mother of his Son and as a mere creature, He conferred upon Her in the most exalted degree. In addition to all this her virtues continually augmented: the infused virtues, because She added to them by her own merits, and the acquired virtues, because She nurtured and multiplied them by the intensity of her meritorious acts.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD AND MOST HOLY VIRGIN.

486. My daughter, the Most High communicates to all mortals without distinction the light of the natural virtues; to those who dispose themselves by means of

them and by his graces, He concedes also the infused virtues at the time of their justification. As He is the Author of nature and of grace, He distributes these gifts with greater or less abundance, according to his equity and pleasure. In Baptism He instills the virtues of faith, hope and charity, and with these, other virtues, by which the creature is to co-operate and exert itself toward the pursuit of Good, not only preserving within itself those received in the sacraments, but acquiring others by its own merits and exertions. This will be the greatest happiness and blessedness of men, that they correspond to the love, which the Creator and Redeemer shows them, adorning their soul and, by the infused habits, familiarizing themselves with the virtuous exercise of their own will. But the failure to correspond to those inestimable benefits brings on their greatest misfortune, because in this disloyalty consists the first great victory of the demon over man.

487. Of thee, my soul, I require that thou exercise thyself and co-operate with the natural and the supernatural, gifts of virtue with an unceasing diligence, and that thou acquire the habits of other virtues, which thou shouldst augment by the frequent exercise of those, which God so liberally and graciously has communicated to thee. The infused gifts, joined to the virtues nurtured and attained by the soul itself, are an adornment and acquisition of marvelous beauty, and very pleasing in the eyes of the Most High. I remind thee also, my dearest, that the Almighty has been so generous in conferring these blessings on thy soul and has enriched it with such great treasures of grace, that if thou shouldst fall into disgrace, it would be thy fault, and thou wouldst incur a greater guilt, than many generations of men. Consider and always remember the great nobility of virtue, how it

so enlightens and beautifies the soul, that even if there were no other gain or object, the desire of possessing it for its own sake would be entirely justifiable. Now, that which exalts virtue beyond all comparison is, that its final end is God himself, for whom truth and perfection, which are its constituents, must be primarily intended; and as soon as virtues attain this their end, namely God himself, they will be the foundation of the happiness and blessedness of the creature.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE VIRTUE OF FAITH, AND HOW MOST HOLY MARY PRACTICED IT.

488. In few words the holy Elizabeth described the greatness of the faith of most holy Mary, when, as reported to us by the evangelist Luke, She exclaimed: "Blessed art thou for having believed, because the words and promises of the Lord shall be fulfilled in Thee" (Luke 1, 45). The faith of this great Lady must be estimated from the greatness of her good fortune and beatitude, and from her ineffable dignity; for her faith inspired Her with so great and so excellent a belief in God, that it merited a place inferior only to God himself. She believed that Sacrament of all sacraments and mysteries, which was to be fulfilled in her own Self. So great was the prudence and the divine light in Mary our Mistress, in believing this new and unheard of mystery of the Incarnation, that it surpassed all human and angelic understanding, and that it could be properly estimated and understood only in the divine Mind, the workshop of the Most High, where in the power of his right hand all the virtues of this Queen had their origin and completion. I always find myself taken aback and stupefied, whenever I speak of these virtues, and more particularly of the interior ones; for though great is the light and intelligence, which were given to me concerning them, yet too limited are human terms to describe the concept and acts of faith, which were engendered in the mind and spirit of Her, who was the most faithful of all creatures, or rather, of

Her, who was greater in faith than all of them taken together. I will say what I can, acknowledging my inability to say what I desire, and much more, what is due to the reality.

489. The faith of the most holy Mary was an image of the whole creation and an open prodigy of the divine power, for in Her the virtue of faith existed in the highest and the most perfect degree possible; in a certain manner and to a great extent, it made up for the want of faith in men. The Most High has given this excellent virtue to mortals so that, in spite of the carnal and mortal nature, they might have the knowledge of the Divinity and of his mysteries and admirable works: a knowledge so certain and infallibly secure, that it is like seeing Him face to face, and like the vision of the blessed angels in heaven. The same object and the same truth, which they see openly, we perceive obscured under the veil of faith.

490. One glance at the world will make us understand, how many nations, reigns and provinces, since the beginning of the world, have lost their claims to this great blessing of the faith, so little understood by the thankless mortals: how many have unhappily flung it aside, after the Lord had conferred it on them in his generous mercy, and how many of the faithful, having without their merit received the gift of faith, neglect and despise it, letting it lie idle and unproductive for the last end to which it is to direct and guide them. It was befitting therefore, that the divine equity should have some recompense for such lamentable loss, and that such an incomparable benefit should find an adequate and proportionate return, as far as is possible from creatures; it was befitting that there should be found at least one Creature, in whom the virtue of faith should come to its fullest perfection, as an example and rule for the rest.

491. All this was found in the great faith of the most holy Mary and on account of Her and for Her alone, if there had been no other creature in the world, it would have been most proper, that God should contrive and create the excellent virtue of faith; for according to our way of understanding, Mary by Herself was a sufficient pledge to the divine Providence, that He would find a proper return on the part of man, and that the object of this faith would not be frustrated by the want of correspondence among mortals. The faith of this sovereign Queen was to make recompense for their default and She was to copy the divine prototype of this virtue in its highest perfection. All the other faithful can measure and gage themselves by the faith of this Mistress; for they will be more or less faithful, the more or less they approach the perfection of her incomparable faith. Therefore She was set as Teacher and example of all the believing, including the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs and all that have believed or will believe in the Christian doctrines to the end of the world.

492. Some one might ask the question: how can it be possible, that the Queen of heaven exercised faith, since She had clear visions of the Divinity many times, and many more times was favored with abstract visions, which likewise make evident that which is perceived by the understanding, as was said above (No. 229, 237) and will be said over and over again later on. On account of its uncertainty, the Apostle says, that faith is the substance of the things that appear not; by which is meant, that we have no other presence or evidence of the real existence of the things we hope for as the ultimate realization of our happiness, than that which is obscurely and as in a mirror presented to us by faith. It is the force of this infused habit, drawing us to believe what we do not see,

and the infallible certitude of what is believed, which present those strong motives for prompting the will to strive after what it desires and hopes. According to this doctrine, it seems, that, if the most holy Virgin had ever enjoyed the vision and possession of God (for these two are one) She was deprived of the obscurity necessary for the existence of faith in the things, which She had seen face to face; especially if her understanding retained the images of what She had seen in the intuitive or open vision of the Divinity.

493. But this experience was not only no hindrance to the faith of the most holy Mary, but augmented and raised it to its highest excellence. For the Lord wished, that his Mother should be so wonderfully distinguished in this virtue of faith (and likewise in the virtue of hope), that She should therein surpass all that is given to ordinary wayfarers. He wished, that her understanding, in order to befit her position as the Mistress and Artist of these great virtues be embellished at one time by the most perfect acts of faith and hope, at another enraptured with the vision and the possession (even if only temporary), of the very End and Object of faith and hope. Thus She was prepared by her personal experience and fruition to teach the faithful to believe what She had herself seen and enjoyed. To join these two things in the most holy soul of Mary was easy to the power of the Almighty; it was due to her dignity as his most pure Mother, and so it must be done: no privilege, however great, was unbecoming to Her; and in Her none must be wanting.

494. It is true that the clear vision of a mystery is incompatible with the obscurity of the faith by which we believe it, and the possession of a thing excludes the hope of it. So most holy Mary, whenever these high mysteries were shown to Her by evident intuition or intellectual ab-

stractions did not exercise the obscure acts or habits of faith; for on those occasions She could make use only of her infused science. But the theological virtues of faith and hope did not therefore remain idle all the time of her life; for the Lord, in order to afford Her the possibility of exercising them, suspended the influx and activity of the clear and evident vision, thereby causing a cessation of the effects of infused knowledge, and making room for the obscurity of faith and the Lord hid himself from Her by taking away all clear evidence of Himself from her mind. This happened in the most high mystery of the Incarnation, as I shall relate in its place (Part II, 119, 133).

495. It was not proper, that the Mother of God should be deprived of the reward of the infused virtues of faith and hope; yet in order to gain this reward, it was necessary to merit it; and in order to merit it, She must have practiced these virtues in proportion to the reward. Just as her merits were great beyond comparison, so the faith in each and every one of the acts of this exalted Lady were correspondingly great; for She perceived and accepted explicitly all the truths of the Catholic religion with the deepest and most perfect faith as a wayfarer. Manifestly the understanding, as soon as it sees the proper evidence for that which it perceives, does not wait for the consent of the will in order to believe, for before it can receive the command of the will, it has already been compelled to accept the truth by its evidences. Therefore the act of believing what cannot be denied, is not meritorious. When most holy Mary assented to the message of the archangel, She merited an ineffable reward on account of the act of faith necessary to believe such a deep mystery; and the same was true of other acts of faith, whenever the Most High gave Her an opportunity for its

exercise by withdrawing the infused knowledge. But even when She applied infused knowledge, She gained great merit, on account of the love with which She utilized it, as I have said in another place (Supra 232, 381, 384).

496. Just as little did She use the gift of infused science, when She lost the divine Child, at least not in order to find the place where He tarried, though this was possible to Her in many other things. She did not then make use of the clear images of the Divinity; also not at the foot of the Cross, because the Lord restricted those visions and operations of her most holy soul which would have prevented sorrow. It was becoming, that She should feel it and be left to the strength of her faith and hope alone. The joy occasioned by any of her visions or intelligences of the Divinity (even if only abstractive), would naturally prevent pain, unless God wrought a new miracle to unite pain with joy. It was not proper that God should work this miracle, since on the sorrows of the Lady depended her merits, and the imitation of her divine Son was to be commensurate with the graces and excellences of the Mother. Therefore She sought the Child sorrowfully, as She herself says, in faith and lively hope; and the same virtues were also active in witnessing the Passion and Resurrection of her beloved Son. During those times She depended upon Catholic faith, which then became as it were restricted and confined to Her, as its Mistress and Foundress.

497. Three qualities or excellences must in particular be mentioned in speaking of the faith of the most holy Mary: its continuity, its intensity and the intelligence with which it was exercised. The faith of Mary as mentioned above, was suspended only during those times, in which She enjoyed the clearness of the intuitive, and the

evidence of the abstractive visions of the Divinity. Although only the Lord himself, who dispensed them, could know when She put into operation the one or the other kind of acts, yet the most holy Queen, in making use of the different kinds of spiritual activity, never allowed Her understanding to remain idle for one instant of her life, and from the first moment of her Conception She never lost sight of God. For when She suspended faith, it was because She was enjoying the clear vision of God through the highest kind of infused knowledge, and as soon as the Lord interrupted this clear vision, She renewed the memory of his presence by her faith. The interchange and succession of these acts produced in the mind of the most holy Mary an exquisite harmony, to which the Most High called the attention of the angels, when He said in the eighth chapter of the Canticles: "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends hearken: make me hear thy voice."

498. In regard to the intensity or efficacy of the faith of this sovereign Princess, it is certain, that it exceeded that of the Apostles, Prophets and Saints taken together and reached the highest degree possible in a creature. It not only exceeded the faith of all true believers, but She supplied the faith that was wanting in all those that have not believed and She could by Her faith enrich them all. Thus Her faith remained firm, immovable and constant, when the Apostles in the hour of the Passion fell away; and if all the temptations, deceits, errors, and falsehoods of the world were joined together, they could not prevail or disturb the invincible faith of the Queen of believers. She, its Foundress and Instructress, would overcome them all and issue forth victorious and triumphant.

499. The intelligent love, with which She explicitly believed all the divine truths, cannot be expressed in

words, without misrepresenting its intensity. The most holy Mary knew all that She believed and believed all that She knew; for the infused theological knowledge of the credibility of faith's mysteries, and the understanding of this credibility, existed in the wisest Virgin Mother in the highest degree possible in a mere creature. Her knowledge was kept in a constant actuality, and by means of her memory, like that of an angel, She never forgot, that which once She had learnt. This gift and faculty of the understanding She kept in constant operation in order to exercise her deep faith; only at times, as already said, God suspended faith by other acts of the mind (No. 492, 465). Except that She was not yet a comprehensor, nothing was wanting in regard to her intelligence of the matters of faith and in regard to the clear knowledge of the Divinity. In this regard She held a position far above that of all the wayfarers and She by Herself constituted a class of such high degrees, as cannot be attained by any other wayfarer to heaven.

500. And if the most holy Mary, while She exercised the acts of faith and hope, was in what might be called her most ordinary and therefore the lowest degree of activity, and if in that state She excelled all the angels and saints in merits by her faith and love, what must we say of the excellence of her acts, her merits and her affections, during the time in which She was exalted by the divine power to the blessed state of highest intuitive vision and clear knowledge of the Divinity? If this is beyond the comprehension of the angelic mind, how can an earthly creature ever hope to find words to describe it? I therefore can only express the mere wish, that all mortals might come to a knowledge of the precious value of faith, by learning it from this heavenly Original, in whom

faith attained its ultimate perfection and where it completely fulfilled the end for which it was created. Let the infidels, the heretics, the pagans and idolaters approach this Mistress of faith, most holy Mary, in order to be enlightened in their falsehoods and darksome errors and in order to find the sure way toward the last end of their being. Let also Catholics approach and learn to understand the copious rewards of this virtue; let them ask the Lord with the Apostles to increase their faith (Luke 7, 5). Not that they ever can reach the faith of most holy Mary, but let them ask for the desire to imitate Her and follow Her, for by her faith She teaches us, and by her merits She helps us to obtain this virtue.

501. Saint Paul calls the patriarch Abraham the father of all the faithful (Rom. 6, 11), because he first received the promise, hoping against hope (Rom. 4, 18). He wishes to extol the excellence of the Patriarch's faith, because he believed the promise of the Lord, that Sarah, his wife, would bear him a son though she was sterile, and, according to the laws of nature, incapable of conception; moreover, in offering his son as a sacrifice at God's command, he relinquished at the same time the prospect of the countless offspring, which the Lord had promised to Him. This all, and many other sayings and promises of the Lord were made impossible of fulfillment according to the laws of nature, yet Abraham believed, that the divine power could execute them in a supernatural manner. Therefore he merited to be called the Father of all the believers and to receive the seal of his faith which justified him, namely circumcision.

502. But our supereminent Lady, Mary, possesses much greater rights and titles to be called the Mother of

faith and of all the faithful. In her hand is hoisted the standard and ensign of faith for all the believers in the law of grace. First indeed, according to the order of time, was the Patriarch and consequently he was ordained to be the father and head of the Hebrew people: great was his belief in the promises concerning Christ our Lord, and in the works of the Most High. Nevertheless incomparably more admirable was the faith of Mary in all these regards and She excels him in dignity. Greater difficulty and incongruity was there that a virgin should conceive and bring forth, than that an aged and sterile woman should bear fruit; and the patriarch Abraham was not so certain of the sacrifice of Isaac, as Mary was of the inevitable sacrifice of her most holy Son. She is the One, who perfectly believed and hoped in all the mysteries, and She shows to the whole Church, how it must believe in the Most High and in the works of his Redemption. Having thus understood the faith of Mary our Queen, we must admit Her to be the Mother of the faithful and the prototype of the Catholic faith and of holy hope. And in order to conclude this chapter, I will add, that Christ, our Redeemer and Teacher, as He was a comprehensor and as his most holy soul enjoyed the highest glory and the beatific vision, had no necessity or occasion for faith, nor could He in his own actions give us an example of this virtue. But what the Lord could not do in his own Person, He did in the person of his most holy Mother, constituting Her as the Foundress, the Mother and the example of faith in his evangelical Church. And thus on the day of universal accounting this sovereign Mistress and Queen shall in an especial manner assist her most holy Son in the judgment of those, who, in spite of such an example, have not believed during their stay on earth.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, OUR LADY.

503. My daughter, the inestimable treasure of the virtue of divine faith is hidden to those mortals who have only carnal and earthly eyes; for they do not know how to appreciate and esteem a gift and blessing of such incomparable value. Consider, my dearest, what the world was without faith and what it would be today if my Son and Lord would not preserve faith. How many men whom the world has celebrated as great, powerful and wise have precipitated themselves, on account of the want of light of faith, from the darkness of their unbelief into most abominable sins, and thence into the eternal darkness of hell! How many kingdoms and provinces, being blind themselves, follow these still more blind leaders until they together fall into the abyss of eternal pains! And they are followed by the bad Christians, who having received the grace and blessing of faith, live as if they had it not in their hearts.

504. Do not forget, my dear friend, to be thankful for this precious jewel which the Lord has given thee as a dower and a wedding gift of thy espousal with Him, in order to draw thee to the bridal chamber of his holy Church and afterwards to have intercourse with Him in the eternal beatitude. Continually exercise this virtue of faith, for it places thee near to thy last end, after which thou strivest, and brings thee near to the object of thy desires and thy love. Faith teaches the sure way of eternal salvation, faith is the light that shines in the darkness of this mortal life and pilgrimage; it leads men securely to the possession of the fatherland to which they are wayfaring, if they do not allow it to die out by infidelity and sinfulness. Faith enlivens the other virtues and serves as a nourishment of the just man and a support in his labors.

Faith confounds and fills with fear the infidels and the lax Christians in their negligence; for it convinces them in this world of their sin and threatens punishment in the life to come. Faith is powerful to do all things, for nothing is impossible to the believer; faith makes all things attainable and possible. Faith illumines and ennobles the understanding of man, since it directs him in the darkness of his natural ignorance, not to stray from the way, and it elevates him above himself so that he sees and understands with infallible certainty what is far above his powers and assures him of it no less than if he saw it clearly before him. He is thus freed from the gross and vile narrow-mindedness of those who will believe only what they can experience by their own limited natural powers, not considering that the soul, as long as it lives in the prison of this corruptible body, is very much circumscribed and limited in its sphere of action by the knowledge drawn from the coarse activity of the senses. Appreciate, therefore, my daughter, this priceless treasure of the Catholic faith given thee by God, watch over it and practice it in great esteem and reverence.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE VIRTUE OF HOPE, AND HOW THE VIRGIN OUR LADY PRACTICED IT.

505. The virtue of hope naturally follows upon that of faith, since it is ordained as its complement. For if the Most High instills in us the divine light of faith, and if He wishes us, without regard to differences of position and of age, to come into the infallible knowledge of the Godhead and of his mysteries and promises, it is for no other reason than that each one of us, knowing Him as our last end and object, and learning of the means of arriving at it, may engender within himself the vehement desire to reach that goal. This desire, which naturally carries with it the inclination to attain this highest Good, is called hope and is infused into our will or natural appetite in Baptism. For it belongs to the proper activity of the will to strive after eternal felicity as its greatest good and blessing, to make use of divine grace for obtaining it and for overcoming the difficulties which will occur in its pursuit.

506. How excellent the virtue of hope is, may be learned from the fact that its ultimate object is God himself, our highest Good. Although it perceives and seeks Him as something that is absent, yet at the same time it seeks Him also as something that is attainable through the merits of Christ and through the proper activity of the one that hopes for it. The acts and operations of this virtue are regulated by the light of divine faith and by the prudent reliance on the infallible promise of the Lord.

Thus hope, by means of the reasoning powers, maintains the middle road between despair and presumption, not permitting man to presume on his own powers for the attainment of eternal glory or to set aside meritorious activity on his own part, nor allowing fear or despondency to hinder Him from exerting himself toward it on account of the Lord's promises and assurances of final success. In this security, guaranteed by divine faith in all that pertains to these things and applied in prudent and sound reasoning, man hopes without fear of being deceived and yet also without presumption.

507. From this it can be seen that despair may arise both from a want of believing what faith promises and also from a failure to apply to one's own self the security of the divine promises, in which one believes, but which one falsely supposes unattainable in one's own regard. Between these two dangerous extremes hope directs us in the safe way, maintaining us in the confident belief on the one hand that God will not deny to ourselves what He has promised to all, and on the other, that the promise was not made unconditionally and absolutely, but requires our exertion and effort to merit its fulfillment as far as it is possible with the help of divine grace. For if God has made man capable of the vision of eternal glory, it was not just that any one should attain to such felicity by sinful abuse of the very faculties with which he is to enjoy it; but that he use them in such a way as to befit the end for which he received them. This proper use of the faculties consists in the exercise of the virtues, which prepare man for the enjoyment of his highest good, and in seeking it already in this life by the knowledge and love of God.

508. Now, in most holy Mary this virtue of hope reached the highest degree possible both in regard to it-

self and in regard to all its effects, circumstances and qualities; for the desire and the striving after the last end, which is the vision and the fruition of God, was in Her more active than in all other creatures; moreover this most faithful and prudent Lady did nothing to impede these aspirations, but followed them up with all the perfection possible in a creature. Not only did She possess the infused virtue of faith in the promises of our Lord and its concomitant intensity of hope; but over and above all this She enjoyed beatific vision, in which She learnt to know by experience the infinite truth and fidelity of the Most High. And although She did not have occasion to make use of hope, while enjoying the vision and possession of the Divinity; nevertheless, after again resuming Her ordinary state, She was impelled by the memory of what She had enjoyed, to hope and strive after it with so much the greater force and avidity. Thus the longings of the Queen of all virtues constituted a certain kind of new and particular kind of hope.

509. There was another reason why the hope of the most holy Mary excelled the hope of all the other faithful joined together: namely the greatness of the prospective reward and glory due to this sovereign Queen, for reward is after all the real object of hope and in Her it was to be far above all the glory of the angels and saints; that is, proportionate to the knowledge of this glory assured to Her in God was also her expectation and desire to acquire it. Moreover in order that She might attain the highest summit of this virtue, and that She might worthily hope for all that the powerful arm of God would work in Her, She was befittingly furnished with the light of a supreme faith and all the helps and gifts pertaining thereto, and with an especial assistance of the Holy Ghost. What we have said of the virtue of

hope in the blessed Virgin in regard to its principal object must also be affirmed in regard to its secondary objects, for the gifts and mysterious blessings enjoyed by this Queen of Heaven were so great that they could not be amplified even by the arm of the Almighty God in a mere creature. Now as the great Lady was to receive these favors through the medium of faith and hope, these virtues were proportionately great, and therefore the greatest that could possibly fall to the lot of a handiwork of God.

510. Moreover if, as has already been said of the virtue of faith, the Queen of heaven was endowed with an explicit knowledge and faith of all the revealed truths and of all the mysteries and operations of the Most High, and if the acts of hope corresponded to these acts of faith, who, except the Lord himself could ever comprehend how many and how excellent were the acts of hope, which the Mistress of virtues elicited, since She was aware of her own eternal glory and felicity and of that, which was to be wrought in the rest of the evangelical Church by the merits of her most holy Son? For the sole sake of Mary, as we have before said of her faith, God would have created this virtue, and for her sake He would have conferred it, as He really did, on the whole human race (No. 491).

511. On this account the holy Spirit calls Her the Mother of beautiful love and holy hope (Eccli. 25, 24); for just as She became the Mother of Christ because She furnished Him with the flesh of his body, so the holy Spirit made Her the Mother of hope, because by her especial concurrence and coöperation She conceived and brought forth this virtue for the faithful of the Church. Her prerogative of being the Mother of holy hope was connected with and consequent upon Her being the

Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord, for She knew that in her Son She would lay the foundation of all the security of our hope. On account of these conceptions and births of the most holy Queen, She obtained a certain dominion and sovereignty over those graces and the promises of the Most High, which depended upon the death of Christ, her Son, for their fulfillment. When She of her own free will gave conception and birth to the incarnate Word She turned them all over to us and thereby gave birth to our hope. Thus was accomplished in its legitimate sense that which the Holy Ghost said to Her: "Thy plants are a paradise" (Cant. 4, 13); for all that came forth from Mary, the Mother of grace, was to constitute our happiness, our paradise, and our certain hope of being able to attain them.

512. The Church has a celestial and true father in Jesus Christ, for He engendered and founded it by his merits and labors, and enriched it with his graces, his example and his doctrines, as was to be expected from the Father and Author of such an admirable work. Therefore it was befitting that the Church should have also a loving and kind Mother, who with sweet regalement and caresses, and with maternal solicitude and assistance, should nurse the little children at her breast (I. Cor. 3, 2), nourish them with tender and delicious food as long as they cannot in their infancy bear the food of the robust and strong. This sweet Mother was most holy Mary, who since the beginning of the Church, when the law of grace was born in her yet tender children, began to give forth the sweet milk of her enlightened teaching as a merciful Mother; and who will continue to the end of the world thus to assist and intercede for the new children, which Christ our Lord engenders every day by his merits and at the petitions of this Mother of mercy. She

it is for whom they are born, who raises and nourishes them. She is our sweet Mother, our life and our hope, the original of the blessings, which are ours, She is the example which we are to imitate, She is our assurance in the pursuit of the eternal happiness, merited by her most holy Son, She furnishes the assistance necessary for its final attainment.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.

513. My daughter, as with two indefatigable wings, my spirit raised its flight by means of faith and hope toward the endless and the highest good, until it rested in union with God through intimate and perfect love. Many times I tasted and enjoyed the clear vision and fruition of Him; but as these blessings were not continuous in my state of pilgrimage, I supplied their place by the exercise of faith and hope. They remained with me during my visions and fruitions and immediately became active during their absence, preventing any cessation in my high aspirations. The effects of these virtues, the love, the efforts and the desires which they excited in my soul toward the possession of the eternal fruition of God, cannot be adequately comprehended by the created mind in its present limited state, but they shall be known in God and cause eternal praise in those who will be worthy to see Him in heaven.

514. Thou, my dearest, having received such great enlightenment concerning the excellence of this virtue and the works which I practiced by its help, shouldst work without ceasing to imitate me according to the assistance of divine grace. Renew continually and confer within thyself the promises of the Most High and, with unshaken confidence in their divine truthfulness, raise thy

heart to ardent desires and longings for their attainment. In this firm hope thou canst assure thyself of arriving through the merits of my most holy Son, at the blessed cohabitation in the celestial fatherland and at the companionship of all those who there see in immortal glory the face of the Most High. With its help thou canst raise thy heart above earthly things and fix thy mind upon the immutable Good, to which thou aspirest; all visible things will appear to thee burdensome and disagreeable, and thou wilt esteem them as vile and contemptible; nothing wilt thou strive after except that most lovable and delightful object of thy desires. In my soul there was an ardor of hope, such as is possible only to those who have apprehended its object in faith and tasted it by experience; no tongue and no words can describe or express its intensity.

515. Besides, in order to spur thee on still more, consider and deplore with heartfelt sorrow the unhappiness of so many souls who are images of God and capable of his glory, and who through their own fault are deprived of the true hope of enjoying it. If the children of the holy Church would pause in their vain occupations and would take time to consider and weigh the blessings of unerring faith and hope, which separates them from darkness and which, without their merit, distinguishes them from the followers of blind unbelief, they would without doubt be ashamed of their torpid forgetfulness and repudiate their vile ingratitude. But let them be undeceived, for most terrible punishments await them; they are most detestable in the sight of God and the saints, because they despise the blood shed by Christ for the very purpose of gaining them these blessings. As if all were only a fiction they treat with contempt the blessings of truth, hastening about during their whole life without

spending even one day, and many of them not even an hour, in the consideration of their duties and of their danger. Weep, O soul, over this lamentable evil, and according to thy power work and pray for its extirpation through my most holy Son. Believe me that whatever exertion and attempt thou makest toward this purpose shall be rewarded by his Majesty.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY IN THE MOST HOLY MARY, OUR LADY.

516. The most excellent virtue of charity is the Mistress, the queen, the mother, the life and beauty of all the other virtues; charity governs, moves and directs them to their ultimate and true end, charity leads them on to their ultimate perfection, preserves them and makes them grow, enlightens them and beautifies them, gives them life and efficacy. If the other virtues confer each their measure of perfection on creatures, charity gives them perfection itself and brings them to their full complement. Without charity all is of small value, obscure, languid, lifeless and unprofitable, not being endowed either with the essence or the appurtenances of true vitality. Charity is kind, patient, meek, without emulation, without envy, without offensiveness, desires not to acquire, but readily distributes all, is the cause of all good and consents not to evil; as far as it is concerned (I Cor. 13, 4) it is the fullest participation in the true and ultimate Good. O Virtue of virtues and greatest treasure of heaven! Thou alone hast the key of paradise! Thou art the dawn of eternal light, the sun of eternity's day, the fire which purifies, the wine which inebriates with new delights, the nectar which rejoices, the sweetness which satiates without surceasing, the chamber of rest for the soul, a bond so intimate that it makes us one with God (Joan 17, 21), with the same bond that unites the eternal Father to the Son, and Both to the holy Spirit.

517. On account of the nobility of this most excellent of all virtues, our God and Lord, according to the Gospel of St. John, wished to honor Himself or wished to honor it, by calling Himself Charity (I John 4, 16). There are many reasons why the Catholic Church attributes the divine perfections of omnipotence to the Father, of wisdom to the Son, and of love to the Holy Ghost. For the Father is the beginning, the Son is engendered of the Father through the divine intelligence, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from Both through the will. But the name of Charity and the perfection which it implies is attributed to the Lord himself without distinction of Persons, since the Evangelist says indiscriminately: "God is charity." This virtue in the Lord has the distinction of being the terminus or end of all his operations *ad intra* and *ad extra.* For on the one hand all the divine processions (which are the operations of the Godhead with Himself or *ad intra*), terminate in the reciprocal union and love of the three divine Persons, and thus they constitute an indissoluble bond of unity over and above the indivisibility of the divine Essence, proper to it as being one and the same God. On the other hand the works *ad extra,* namely the creatures, are an offspring of divine charity and are ordained towards it, so that, issuing from that immense sea of divine bounty, they also return by charity and love to the source from whence they sprang. It is peculiar to the virtue of charity in opposition to all the other virtues and gifts, that it is a perfect participation of a divine virtue; it is born of one source, is directed back to the same, and is more adapted to that eternal source than all other virtues. If we call God our hope, our patience, or our wisdom, it is because we receive them from his hand, and not because these perfections are in God as they exist in ourselves.

But we call God our charity, not only because we receive it from the Lord, and because He communicates it to us, but because He himself is essential charity, and the overflow of this divine perfection, which we represent to ourselves as a form and attribute of his Divinity, redounds in our souls, transforming it more perfectly and abundantly than any other virtue.

518. Other admirable qualities of charity are manifested in the relation between God and ourselves; for as this virtue is the source of our being, and afterwards our highest end, God himself, it is also the spur and the ideal of our affection and love of the Lord. For, if the knowledge that God is in Himself the infinite and highest good is not sufficient to move and incite us to love Him, at least the knowledge that He is our own greatest good, should draw and oblige us toward his love. If we could not know how to love Him before He gave his Onlybegotten for us (I John 4, 10), we certainly cannot have an excuse for not loving Him after that sacrifice. For although we might be exonerated for not being able to merit such a benefit, yet now, after we have received this sacrifice without our merit, we can certainly not be excused for not acknowledging the favor.

519. The example which divine Charity furnishes for our own, manifests still more the excellence of this virtue, although it is difficult for me to explain my perception of this excellence. When Christ Our Lord founded his most perfect law of love and grace, He exhorted us to be perfect imitators of our heavenly Father, who allows his sun to rise over the just and the unjust without distinction (Matth. 5, 45). Such doctrine and such an example only He himself, the Son of the eternal Father, could give to men. Among all the visible creatures there is none like the sun to compare with divine charity and

to show us how to imitate it; for this most noble star, from its very nature, without hesitation and entirely according to its own innate tendency, distributes its light in all directions, and without distinction to all who are capable of receiving it, and on its part never denies or suspends its benevolent activity. And this it does without desiring acknowledgment, without imposing any obligation on any one, without asking for benefits or requiring any return, without finding in the objects of its enlightening bounty any previous goodness to move and draw it towards them. Nor does it expect any profit in the communication of its own blessed light, in which all participate and share.

520. At the consideration of the noble attributes of this created charity, who will not recognize the signature of the uncreated Charity which it follows? And who is not ashamed of failing to imitate it? Who can claim to have true charity in himself without copying its prototype? It is true our charity and love cannot create goodness in the object of its affection, as is done by the uncreated Charity of the Lord; nevertheless, even if by charity we cannot make good those whom we love, we can offer the goods of love to all without looking for the advancement of ourselves and without proceeding to deliberate and study whom we are to love and benefit in the hope of being repaid. I do not wish to be understood as saying that love is not free, nor that God was in any way forced to create through natural necessity. All the works *ad extra,* which are those of Creation, are free acts of God. The example contained for us in divine Charity points in another direction, namely, that the free will must not twist or do violence to the inclination and the impulse of charity; but in imitation of the highest Good, which in no way hinders the divine will in its inclination

to do good, the human will must allow itself to be moved and impelled by the inclination of charity to communicate its goodness. For in this manner the divine Will is impelled to distribute the rays of its inaccessible light to all creatures according to the capacity of each one, without any preceding goodness, service or benefit on their side, and without hope of such return afterwards, as the divine Goodness stands in need of nothing.

521. This is in part the nature of Charity in its divine original, God. Outside of God himself, however, we will find it in the fullest perfection possible to a mere creature in none other than most holy Mary, and in Her we find the model after which we are more immediately to copy our own charity. It is evident that the light proceeding from the uncreated Sun of charity, where it is contained without limit or circumscription, communicates itself to all creatures even the most remote according to an order and measurement adjusted in proportion to the proximity or distance of each from the divine source. And this order manifests the fullness and perfection of the divine Providence; for without it, this Providence would show a certain defect, confusedness and discord in the creatures as far as the participation of his goodness and love is concerned. The first place after God himself, in the distribution of divine Charity, was due to that Soul and that Person, who was at the same time uncreated God and created man; for the highest grace and participation of love naturally was to be found where existed the closest and most intimate union with God, as it existed and as it will exist forever in Christ our Lord.

522. The second place is due to his most holy Mother Mary, in whom charity and divine love found its resting place in an especial manner. For, according to our way of apprehending, the uncreated Charity could not be

quieted until It should find a creature to which It could communicate Itself in such great plenitude, that the love and affection of the whole human race should in its entirety be reproduced in that Creature alone. It was intended that this chosen Creature should in Herself be endowed with the gifts of charity, without the shortcomings and defects common to the rest of mortals infected with sin, so that She by Herself would be able to supply the balance of creation and make for it the greatest possible return of love. Mary alone was chosen among all creatures to imitate the Sun of justice in charity (Cant. 6, 9), and faithfully to copy this virtue from its Original. She by Herself knew how to love more ardently and perfectly than all the rest of creatures combined, to love God entirely for his own sake, purely, intensely and without defect, and also loving creatures for God's sake and in a manner similar to Him. She alone adequately followed the impulse of charity and her generous inclination of loving the highest Good as highest Good, without any side intentions; and of loving the creatures on account of their participation in God, without the thought of a return or reward of her love. And in perfect imitation of the uncreated Charity, Mary by her charity was able and knew how to love in such a way as to make better that which is loved; for by her love She made better heaven and earth and all things that exist outside of God.

523. If the charity of this great Lady were put in the balance with that of all the men and angels, hers would outweigh theirs by far; for She by Herself exceeded them all in her knowledge of the essence and qualities of the divine Charity and consequently only Mary knew how to imitate It with adequate perfection and above all the powers of intellectual creatures. In this excess of love and charity She repaid and satisfied the debt of in-

finite love due to the Lord from creatures, as far as He could demand a return of them, for their return was not to be infinite in value, that being impossible. Just as the love and the charity of the most holy soul of Jesus Christ was in its greatness proportionate to the hypostatic union, so the love of Mary was great in proportion to the excellence conferred upon Her by the eternal Father, when He appointed Her as the one, who as Mother was to conceive and bear his Son for the salvation of the world.

524. Thence we understand that all the gifts and the blessings of creatures depend in some manner on the love and charity of the blessed Virgin toward God. In Her alone it was possible that divine Charity could exist in this world in its highest and ultimate perfection. She paid the whole debt of charity at a time when all men were unable to pay or even to understand the greatness of their debt. She, by her most perfect charity, obliged the eternal Father to sacrifice his most holy Son for Herself and in Redemption of the whole world; for if Mary had loved less and if her charity had been defective, the proper preparation for his Incarnation would have been wanting. But as soon as any creature was found, which resembled God so closely as She, it was, so to say, but a natural consequence that He should descend to Her as He did.

525. All this is the meaning of the words of the Holy Ghost when He calls Mary the mother of beautiful love (Eccli. 24, 24), as has already been explained correspondingly in regard to hope. These words to Mary signify: Mary is the Mother of Him, who is our sweetest love, Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer, who became the most beautiful among men by a divine, infinite and uncreated beauty, and by a human nature which was to be without guilt or blemish and to which no beauty of grace that

could be communicated by the Divinity, was wanting (I Pet. 2, 22). She is also the Mother of beautiful love, for She alone engendered in her soul the perfect love and charity and the most beautiful affection. All the rest of the creatures combined could not attain the beauty and faultlessness of her Charity for theirs was not worthy to be called absolutely beautiful. She is the Mother of our love; for She drew it toward the earth for us; She cultivated it for us; She taught us to know and practice it; there is no other creature in heaven or on earth that could be such a teacher of this beautiful love for men or angels. Therefore all the saints are but rays of this sun, and streamlets flowing from this ocean; so much the better will they know how to love, the more they participate in this love and charity of most holy Mary, and in as far as they succeed in imitating and copying it more exactly.

526. The sources of this charity and love of our princess Mary were her profound knowledge and wisdom, derived as well from her infused faith and hope, as also from the gifts of science, intellect and wisdom given to Her by the Holy Ghost; but the greatest of all the sources of her love were the intuitive and abstractive visions of the Divinity. Through all these mediums She reached the highest knowledge of the uncreated Charity and drank of it at its very fountain, and as She thus learned, how God was to be loved for his own sake and the creature for the sake of God, also how to practice and execute this love with the most intense and fervent desire. Moreover, as the power of God found no impediment or hindrance, no inadvertence, ignorance or imperfection, nor any tardiness of the will in this Queen, it could operate in Her according to his pleasure. This was not possible in other creatures, since in none of them it found the same disposition as in most holy Mary.

527. In Her was the fulfillment of that great natural and divine precept: "Thou shalt love thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength." Mary alone satisfied this obligation and debt for all men, which in this life and before seeing God they neither knew nor could ever fulfill entirely. This Lady fulfilled it more perfectly during her pilgrimage than the saints even in the state of beatitude. Moreover She also satisfied the intentions of God in regard to this precept, namely that it remain not unfruitful and as it were frustrated on the part of wayfaring men; for most holy Mary by Herself sanctified and fulfilled it entirely for all of them, supplying by her charity all that was wanting in the fulfillment of this precept among men. And probably if God had not foreknown that Mary our Queen would be among the number of the mortals, He would not have given this command in this form. But on Her account He was pleased to give it; to Her we owe not only this command of perfect charity, but also the adequate fulfillment of it among men.

528. O most sweet and most beautiful Mother of beautiful love and charity! Let all the nations know Thee, let all generations bless Thee, and let all the creatures magnify and praise Thee! Thou alone art the perfect One, the beloved One, the chosen Mother of uncreated Charity. It formed Thee and selected Thee to shine like the sun in thy most beautiful and most perfect love (Cant. 6, 9)! Let all us miserable children of Eve approach this sun in order to be enlightened and inflamed. Let us approach this Mother in order to be born again in love. Let us approach this Teacher in order to be taught the love, affection and charity which is without defect. Love is a disposition which is pleased and satisfied with the thing loved. Affection is a selection and separation of

the beloved from other of the same kind, and charity implied in addition to these, a high appreciation and esteem for the goodness of the beloved. All this we will learn from the Mother of true love, who is called by that name precisely because her love possesses all these qualities. In Her we learn to love God for his own sake, resting satisfied in Him with all our heart; to give Him a separate place in all our love from all that is not God, for loving Him, together with other things, only diminishes our love of God. We learn to appreciate Him and esteem Him above gold and above all precious things, for in comparison with Him all precious things are of no value, all beauty is ugliness, and all that is great and estimable in carnal eyes, becomes contemptible and valueless. Of the effects of this love of the most holy Mary, this whole history treats and of them heaven and earth are full. Therefore I will not stay to describe more particularly what no human tongue, nor words of men or angels can convey.

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

529. My daughter, if I desire in maternal affection, that thou follow me and imitate me in all the other virtues, then more especially do I make known and declare to thee my desire to see thee follow me in the virtue of charity, for this is the end and the crowning glory of all other virtues. I desire that thou exert thy utmost powers to copy in thy soul, with the greatest perfection, all that thou hast learnt of my charity. Light up the lamp of thy faith and reason in order to find this drachm of infinite value, and after thou hast (Luke 15, 8) found it, forget and despise all that is earthly and corruptible. In thy own mind consider again and again, ponder and

take heed of the infinite reasons and causes that make God lovable above all other things. In order that thou mayest be sure that thou lovest Him perfectly and truly, search within thyself for the following signs and effects of that love; whether thy thought and meditation dwell continually on God, whether his commands and counsel find in thee no repugnance or remissness, whether thou fearest to offend Him, whether thou seekest immediately to appease Him after having offended Him, whether thou grievest to see Him offended and rejoicest to see Him served by all creatures, whether thou desirest and art delighted to speak continually of his love; see whether thou delightest in the memory of his presence, whether thou grievest at thy forgetfulness of Him and at his absence from thee, whether thou lovest what He loves, and abhorrest what He abhors, whether thou seekest to draw all men towards his friendship and grace, whether thou prayest with confidence; see whether thou receivest with gratitude his benefits, whether thou dost not waste them but rather turnst them to good account for his honor and glory, whether thou strivest to extinguish in thyself all the movements of the passions, which retard thee or hinder thee in thy loving aspirations and in thy works of virtue.

530. All these and many more are the signs of greater or less charity in the soul. When charity is ardent and strong, it will be especially careful not to suffer the forces of the soul to remain idle, nor to consent to any blemish, because it will immediately consume and wipe it out. It will not rest until it can taste the highest Good of its love. For without it, this love droops, is wounded and dies. It thirsts after that wine which inebriates the heart, causing a forgetfulness of all that is corruptible and passing (Cant. 5, 1). And as charity is the mother and the

root of all virtue, its fecundity will immediately show itself as soon as it has found a place in the soul; it will fill it and adorn it with the habits of the other virtues, and engender them one after another by establishing the practice of them, as the Apostle says (I Cor. 13, 4). The soul that is in charity not only feels the effects of charity in itself, but through charity it is secure of being loved by God; through this divine love, it enjoys the reciprocal effect of God's indwelling, so that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost will come and live in it as their temple, and this is a blessing which no words and no example can properly express in this mortal life.

531. The right order of this virtue is to love God above all the creatures, then to love oneself, and him who is nearest to oneself, namely, our neighbor. God must be loved with the whole understanding, without deceit, with the whole will, without reserve or division, with the whole mind, without forgetfulness, without diminution, without negligence or remissness. The motive of charity in loving God is none else than God Himself; for He must be loved for his own sake, being the highest Good and most perfect goodness and holiness. Loving God for such motives causes the creature to love itself and the neighbor and itself; for both belong to one and the same God, from whom they derive their origin, their life and activity. He that loves God truly for Himself will also love all that is of God and all that in some way participates in his goodness. Therefore charity looks upon the neighbor as a work and a participation of God and makes no distinction between friend or enemy. Charity looks only upon that which is of God and which pertains to Him in others, no matter whether the neighbor is friend-

ly or hostile, a benefactor or a persecutor. It attends only to the difference in the participation of the divine and infinite goodness and according to this standard it loves all in God and for God.

532. All other kinds of love, such as loving creatures for less exalted motives, hoping for some kind of reward, advantage or return, or loving them under cover of disorderly concupiscence, or with a mere human and natural love, even if it should spring from naturally virtuous and well ordered motives, are not infused charity. As it is usual in men to be moved by these partial excellences and for selfish and earthly ends, there are few who embrace and appreciate the nobility of this generous virtue and who exercise it with proper perfection. For they seek even God and pursue Him, for the sake of temporal blessings, or for spiritual benefits and pleasures. I desire that thou, my daughter, drive out of thy heart all these disorderly loves, and that thou live only in well ordered charity, to which the Most High has inclined thy desires. If thou so many times reaffirmest that this virtue is so beautiful, so pleasing and so worthy of being sought and esteemed by all creatures, apply thyself to know it in its full excellence; and having come to understand its value, set thyself to purchase this incomparable gem by forgetting and extinguishing in thy heart all love that is not the perfect love. Love no creatures except for God, and for what thou seest in them as coming from God and belonging to Him, in the same manner as a bride loves all the servants and connections of the house of her bridegroom because they are his. Forget to love anything not referable to God or not lovable on his account, nor love in any other way except as I have asked thee or the Most High has commanded thee to love.

Thou wilt also know whether thou lovest with pure charity, by thy behavior towards friends and enemies, the naturally agreeable and disagreeable, the polite and the impolite, those that possess or do not possess natural advantages. All this sort of distinction does not come from pure charity, but from the natural inclinations and passions of the appetites, which thou must govern, extinguish and eradicate by means of this sublime virtue.



CHAPTER IX.

OF THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE AS PRACTICED BY THE MOST HOLY QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

533. As the acts of the understanding go before the acts of the will and direct them on the way, the virtues pertaining to the exercise of the understanding also precede those of the will. Although the proper sphere of the intellect is to recognize the truth and comprehend it, thereby perhaps causing a doubt whether it can be classed as a virtue (for virtue of its very nature consists in tending toward and practicing the good); yet it is certain that there are also intellectual virtues, the practice of which is praiseworthy in proportion as they conform to reason and truth; for these are the proper good of the intellect. When therefore it proposes truth to the will and instructs the will to follow its guidance, then this act of the intellect is theologically good, when matters of faith are concerned, and morally good when, as for instance in the exercise of prudence, the operations of the appetites are regulated. On this account the virtue of prudence comes first as pertaining to the proper use of the understanding. It is as it were the root of the other cardinal and moral virtues; for these others are praiseworthy when accompanied by prudence, and faulty and reprehensible when devoid of it.

534. The sovereign Queen Mary possessed this virtue of prudence in supreme excellence and in proportion to the height of her other virtues already described and yet to be described. On account of her wonderful pru-

dence the Church calls her the "Virgin most prudent." As this virtue governs all the others and as this whole history treats of the exercise of these virtues in the most holy Mary, all of what little I can say and manifest of this sea of prudence will be nothing else than a continual implied reference to her prudence, and all her works will show the splendor of this virtue. Therefore I will speak here more in general of the prudence of the sovereign Queen, exhibiting the different parts and qualities of prudence as taught us by teachers and saints, in order that we may thereby obtain a better understanding of it in her regard.

535. Of the three kinds of prudence called political, purgative and that of a soul already purified or perfect, none was wanting in our Queen and they were hers in the highest degree. For, although all her faculties were most pure and perfect, or in other words, had no need of being purified from any faultiness or opposition to virtue, yet they could be improved as regards the natural knowledge and in as far as the progress from goodness and holiness to greatest goodness and holiness was concerned. This must be understood of course only of her own works, as far as they are compared with each other, and not in as far as they are brought into comparison with the works of others. For in comparison with the works of other saints there was no great or small in this City of God, whose foundations are above the holy mountains. But in her own works, since they grew in charity and grace from the first moment of her Conception, some of them, though in themselves most perfect and superior to all the works of the saints, were less perfect in comparison with other acts of a later period in her life.

536. Political prudence in general is that which ponders and weighs all that is to be done and reduces it to

the dictates of reason, eschewing all that is not just and good. The purgative or purifying prudence is that which disposes and selects all things in such a way as to rectify the heart by divine contemplation toward all celestial things. The prudence of the purified or perfect soul is that which directs and centres all the affections upon the highest Good, as if no other object existed. All these kinds of prudence existed in most holy Mary in order that She might distinguish and know without fail, direct and accomplish without remissness or tardiness, whatever is most perfect and excellent in the fulfillment of her works. Never did the judgment of this sovereign Lady in the whole range of her activity, dictate or attach itself to anything which was not the best and most proper. No one ever equaled Her in disposing and directing all visible or worldly matters so as to make them useful for divine contemplation. Therefore having perceived them so intimately and in so many different lights of knowledge, She was united in such a manner to the highest Good by divine love that no preoccupation or hindrance ever prevented Her from resting completely in the centre of her love.

537. It is manifest also that all the component parts of prudence existed in their entirety in our Queen. The first is memory, which retains in the mind things already experienced in the past. From past experiences are drawn many rules for proceeding and acting in the present and in the future; because prudence concerns itself with particular actions, and as there cannot be a general rule for all of them, it is necessary to draw special rules from many past examples and experiences stored up in the memory. Our Sovereign was so endowed with it that She never experienced the natural defect of forgetfulness; for that which once She had understood and learnt,

was ever present and immovable in her memory. In regard to this blessing most pure Mary transcended the whole human and even the angelic order, because God made Her a summary of all that was most perfect in both of them. She contained in Herself all the essential goodness of the human nature and all that was most perfect and the farthest removed from blemish in the accidental qualities of man; and many of the natural and many of the supernatural gifts of the angelic nature She possessed by special privilege and in a higher degree than the angels themselves. One of these gifts was a fixed and constant memory, incapable of forgetting what She had learnt. In regard to her memory She excelled the angels in the same proportion as She excelled them in the virtue of prudence.

538. Only in one respect this blessing was limited in a mysterious manner by the humble purity of the most holy Mary: if the images of all things were to be fixed in the memory, it was unavoidable, that also much that springs from the vileness and sinfulness of creatures, should fill its sacred precincts. Therefore the most humble and pure Princess besought the Lord that the full gift of memory should not extend itself toward the preservation of these images, but only in so far as was necessary for the exercise of fraternal charity towards her neighbor and for the practice of other virtues. The Most High granted this petition more in testimony of her most humble purity than on account of any danger, to which these images could expose Her; for the sun is not harmed by the impurities which it may shine upon, nor are the angels disturbed by our vileness, since to the pure all things are pure (Tit. 1, 15). But in this regard the Lord of the angels wished to privilege his Mother more than them; He wished to tolerate in her memory only those images

which pertain to the highest sanctity, honesty, cleanliness and the most amiable purity, and what was most pleasing to Himself. Thus her most holy soul, in regard to these things, was without blemish, and her memory was adorned with the representations of all that is most pure and desirable.

539. Another component part of the virtue of prudence is the intelligence which principally concerns itself with what is to be done in the present moment. It is a correct and profound understanding of the reasons and the principles, according to which virtuous actions are to be performed. It reduces this understanding into action, not only in so far as to give a comprehensive knowledge of the excellence of virtue in general, but also in so far as to direct our activity in the proper channel for performing there and then each particular work in a virtuous and perfect manner. Thus when I have a deep understanding of the precept: "Do nothing unto others what thou wishest not to be done unto thyself," I will at once know that I shall not do this or that particular injury, because it would seem a wrong if done to me or some one else. This kind of intelligence most holy Mary possessed in so much the higher degree than all the rest of creatures, as She exceeded them in knowledge of the moral virtues, in profound penetration regarding infallible rectitude, and in participation of the divine righteousness. In the light of this intelligence, derived from the splendors of the Divinity itself, there could be no deceit, no ignorance, no doubt, no mere opinions, as is the case with other creatures. For She understood and penetrated all the truths, both in their general and their particular bearings, and especially as far as their practical application in the matter of virtue is concerned, seeing them as they are in themselves. Thus it must be held

that this part of prudence was hers in an unequalled fullness and plenitude.

540. The third component part of prudence is called providence. It is the most important of all the parts of prudence, for in human actions it is most important that the present be well ordered toward the future, so that all things may be rightly adjusted. This is effected by providence. Our Lady and Queen practiced this part of prudence in a degree even more excellent (if possible) than all the other parts of prudence; for besides the vivid memory of the past and the profound understanding of things present, She had an unerring knowledge and understanding of things to come, to which her providence extended itself. With this knowledge and infused science She so arranged all happenings that they were a preparation for the future and nothing could come upon Her unawares or by surprise. All things were by Her foreseen, considered and weighed beforehand in the sanctuary of her mind, illumined by infused light. Thus without a shade of doubt or uncertainty, such as is the lot of other men, She awaited the events before their arrival with unerring certitude, so that for all things She found a place, a time and opportune circumstances directing them all toward the Good.

541. These three parts of prudence comprehend the activity of the intellect in the practice of this virtue, for they secure the good order of our actions in regard to past, the present and the future. However, when we consider this virtue under another aspect, namely in so far as it perceives the proper means for the practice of virtue and directs the will to employ them rightly, the teachers and philosophers mention five other points or different kind of activities of prudence, namely; docility, reasonableness, cleverness, circumspection and caution. Docil-

ity is the good judgment and readiness of the creature to be taught by others better informed than itself, and a disposition not inflated by its own knowledge, and not resting unduly on its own insight and wisdom. Reasonableness, or the power of drawing correct inferences, consists in reasoning without error from generally understood principles to the particular course of action in each single case. Cleverness is a diligent attention and practical application of our activity to that which happens, enabling us to judge rightly and follow the best course of action, just as docility is attention to the teachings of others. Circumspection is a just consideration of the circumstances connected with each good work; for it is not sufficient that the end of our actions be good, but it is necessary to consider the opportuneness of the circumstances. Cautiousness is a discreet attention to the dangers or impediments, so that when they occur under cover of virtue or unexpectedly, we may not be found rash or unprepared.

542. All these complements of prudence existed in the Queen of heaven without any faultiness and in their fullest perfection. Docility belonged to Mary as the legitimate daughter of her incomparable humility; for though She had received the plenitude of science from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, and though She was the teacher and the mother of true wisdom, She nevertheless allowed Herself to be taught by her elders, by her equals and by those below Her, esteeming Herself as lower than all of them and seeking to be a disciple of those who in comparison to Her were most ignorant. This docility She exhibited during all her life like a most simple dove, disguising her wisdom with a greater prudence than that of the serpent (Matth. 10, 16). As a Child She accepted instruction from her parents, from

her teacher in the temple, from her companions, and later on from her spouse saint Joseph, from the Apostles; from all creatures She wished to learn, being a prodigy of humility, as I have said in another place (No. 406, 472).

543. The reasonableness or prudent judgment of most holy Mary can be easily inferred from what saint Luke says of Her: that She kept and pondered in her heart the mysterious events in the life of her most holy Son. This pondering was the reasoning which She employed, comparing cause with cause in the order in which they occurred and happened, and by this comparison She formed for Herself most prudent counsels, which enabled Her to act with the perfection peculiar to Her. Although She very often understood many things without the discourse of reasoning by a simple intuition and intelligence which exceeded all human understanding; yet, as far as the actual exercise of the virtues was concerned, She applied this process of reasoning from the abstract principles of virtue to her own practice of them.

544. In regard to cleverness and diligent application of the rules of prudence the sovereign Lady also was highly privileged; for She was not weighed down by the heavy load of human passion and corruption, and thus She felt not our languors and tardiness in her faculties, but She was always alert, ready and very skillful in noticing and attending to all that was necessary to come to a correct and wholesome conclusion in the performance of virtuous actions, and in striking, readily and quickly, the happy medium of virtue in her doings. Equally admirable was most holy Mary in her circumspection; for all her works were so accomplished that no point of perfection was missing, and all of them stand forth in the highest perfection possible. And as the greater part of her actions were works of charity towards the neighbor,

and all of them most opportune; therefore in all her teaching, admonishing, consoling, beseeching and correcting of her neighbor, the efficacious sweetness of her reasonable and pleasing manners met with its full success.

545. The last complement of prudence, called cautiousness, which meets and evades the impediments of virtue, was necessarily also possessed by the Queen of angels in a greater perfection than by these spirits; for her exalted wisdom and the love which accompanied it, incited Her to such caution and foresight, that no event which might be an impediment in the exercise of the most perfect virtue, found Her unprepared and unprovided with a counter remedy. And since the enemy, as will be described later on, not being able to find any hold in her passions, exerted himself so much in placing elaborate and unheard of obstacles in her way, the most prudent Virgin had occasion to practice this caution many times, thereby exciting the wonder of the Apostles. On account of the cautious discretion of the most holy Mary the demon pursued Her with a terrified wrath and envy, burning with a desire to know by what power She foiled such powerful machinations and cunning snares as he devised in order to hinder or draw Her away. For in every instance he was vanquished and had to be witness of the most perfect exercise of all that is virtuous in all her undertakings and works.

546. After having mentioned and described the parts and complements of prudence, let us also examine the different species or kinds, into which it can be divided, according to the object or the ends to which it is applied. Prudence can be used either in our own actions and affairs, or for the affairs of others, and thus arise two kinds of prudence, directing the activity which concerns ourselves, and that which concerns our neighbors. That

which governs one's own particular activity is called enarchic prudence, and in reference to the Queen of heaven, it is not necessary to say more in proof of her having exercised this kind of prudence, than what has already been said above about the manner in which She regulated her own life. The prudence which regulates the government of others is called pollyarchic; this is subdivided into four kinds, according to four different ways of governing others. The first kind is that which facilitates the government of countries by just and useful laws; it is proper to kings, princes and monarchs and of all those whose authority is supreme. The second kind is called the political prudence, which has its name from the fact that it teaches the right government of cities or republics. The third is called economical prudence, which shows how to govern and manage domestic affairs of the family or particular homes. The fourth is military prudence, which is adapted to prosecution of wars and management of armies.

547. None of these different kinds of prudence was wanting in our great Queen. All were given to Her as habits in the instant of her Conception and of her sanctification so that no grace, no virtue, no perfection which might exalt and beautify Her above all creatures, might be wanting in Her. The Most High made Her an archive and depositary of all his gifts, an example to all the rest of creation thus giving an exhibition of his power and greatness, so that in the whole heavenly Jerusalem it might be known what He could and would do for a mere creature. And in Mary these sublime habits of virtue did not lie idle, for all of them She exercised in the course of her life on many occasions as they offered themselves. As regards economical prudence it is well known how incomparable was the government of her domestic affairs,

when living with her spouse Joseph and with her most holy Son; for in his education and service She acted with such prudence as was befitting the most occult mystery which God entrusted to men, as I shall show in another place, according to my understanding and ability.

548. She exercised also the governing or monarchical prudence as the sole Empress of the Church, teaching, advising and directing the sacred Apostles in the primitive Church, thus helping to lay its foundation and to initiate the laws, rites and ceremonies most necessary and useful for its propagation and establishment. Though She obeyed the Apostles in particular matters, and consulted especially saint Peter as the vicar of Christ and the head of the Church, and saint John as her chaplain, yet they and all the Christians asked her advice and followed it in the general and particular matters relating to the government of the Church. She also taught the Christian kings and princes who approached Her for counsel; for many of them sought to know Her after the Ascension of her most holy Son into heaven. Among them especially can be mentioned the three Kings of the East, when they came to adore the Child. She explained and instructed them in all that they must do for their states, with such light and clearness that She was their star and guide on the way to eternity. They returned to their country enlightened, consoled and astonished at the wisdom, prudence and sweetness of the words which they had heard from the mouth of a tender Maiden. In witness of all the high praise which this Queen deserved in this regard, it is enough to hear her own words: "By me, kings reign, and law-givers decree just things, by me princes rule" (Prov. 8, 13).

549. Neither was the political prudence wanting in Her; for She taught the republics and nations, and the

primitive Christians in particular, how to proceed in public acts and government of their country, how they must obey kings and secular princes, their prelates and bishops, how they are to convoke councils, issue the definitions and decrees resolved upon. Even military prudence found a place in the sovereign Queen, for also in this direction She was consulted by some of the faithful, and She instructed and taught them what was required to carry on a just war with their enemies, so as to conduct them according to the justice and pleasure of the Lord. Here can also be mentioned the courage and prudence with which this powerful Lady vanquished the prince of darkness, teaching us thereby how we must battle with him; for She overcame him by an exalted wisdom and prudence, greater than that shown by David in his combat with the giant, or by Judith with Holofernes, or by Esther with Aman (I Kings, 17, 50, Judith 13, 10, Esth. 7, 6). Even if all these kinds of prudence had not been needed for the actions mentioned, yet it was proper, that this Mother of wisdom, aside of their being befitting ornaments of her most holy soul, should possess them on account of her being the Mediatrix and sole Advocate of this world. For as She was to procure by her intercession all the blessings, which God would bestow upon the human race, and since none of them were to be granted without her intercession, it was necessary, that She should know perfectly all the virtues, which She was to obtain for men, and that these blessings, next to God, their uncreated beginning, should flow from Her as from an original source.

550. There are other helps, which are attached to the virtue of prudence and which are called potential parts, being as it were instruments with which prudence works. They are, synesis, or the aptitude and readiness to form

sane judgments; eubulia, the faculty of giving and suggesting good counsel; gnome, which teaches what exceptions can justly be made to general rules; and this latter is necessary for the use of epikeia, which enables us to judge what particular cases are to be decided by rules higher than the ordinary. All these perfections and excellences adorned the prudence of most holy Mary, so that no one could give such unerring counsel in all possible contingencies, nor could any one, not even the most exalted angel, form such correct judgment in all things as She. Above all was our most prudent Queen skilled in the higher principles and rules of action, and such as were above the ordinary and common laws; but it would require a long discourse even to mention the instances here: many of them will be understood in the sequel of this history of her most holy life. In order to conclude this chapter on the prudence of the blessed Virgin, it is only necessary to say, that the rule by which it is to be measured, is none else than the prudence of the soul of Christ, our Lord; for it was conformed and assimilated entirely to his, since She was to be the Coadjutrix in all the works of wisdom and prudence, performed by the Lord of all creation and Savior of the world.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

551. My daughter, I wish, that all that thou hast written and that thou hast understood in this chapter, be to thee an instruction and a reminder of what, I have taught thee for the government of thy actions. Write in thy heart and fix in thy mind the memory of all that thou hast learnt of my prudence in all that I have thought, desired and executed. Let this light guide thee through the midst of the darkness of human ignorance,

so that thou mayst not be disturbed or confounded by the luring passions, nor especially by the malice and snares laid thee by the watchful malice of thy enemies, seeking to infect thy understanding. Not to be endowed with all the perfections of prudence, is not culpable in the creature; but to be negligent in learning the rules of prudence after having been instructed how to attain this knowledge, is a serious fault and the cause of many mistakes and errors in the conduct of affairs. On account of this negligence the passions countermand, impede, and obstruct the dictates of prudence. This is especially the case with disorderly sorrow and excessive enjoyment, which are apt to pervert the just estimation of good or bad. Thence arise two dangerous vices: precipitation in our actions, impelling us to undertake things without considering the proper means of success, and inconstancy in our good resolutions and in the works once begun. Ungoverned anger or indiscreet fervor, both cause us to be precipitate or remiss in many of our exterior actions, because they are performed without proper moderation and counsel. Hasty judgment and want of firmness in pursuing the good, cause the soul imprudently to desist from its laudable enterprise; for it gives easy admittance to that, which is opposed to the true good, and is highly pleased, now with the true goodness, then again with what is but apparent and deceitful or is presented by the passions or by the demon.

552. Against all these dangers I wish to see thee watchful and provident; and thou wilt be so, if thou attend to the example, which I gave thee in my life, and if thou obey the instructions and counsels of thy spiritual guides; for without them thou must do nothing, if thou wishest to proceed with docile discretion. Be assured, that the Most High will give thee plentiful wisdom; for

a pure submissive and docile heart will draw from Him superabundant aid. Keep in mind always the misfortune of the imprudent and foolish virgins, who, in their thoughtless negligence, rejected wise counsel and cast aside fear, instead of being solicitous; and when afterwards they sought to make up for it, they found the portal of salvation closed against them (Matth. 25, 12). See to it, therefore, my daughter, that thou unite the simplicity of the dove with the prudence of the serpent, and then thy works shall be perfect.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE VIRTUE OF JUSTICE, AS PRACTICED BY MOST HOLY MARY.

553. The great virtue of justice is most necessary for the exercise of the love of God and man, and therefore also for all human conversation and intercourse. It is a habit by which the will is urged to give to each one what belongs to him, and its object matter is the just and equitable dealing, which must be observed toward God. And as there are so many occasions in which man can exercise or violate this equity, and in so many different ways, the range of application of this virtue is very wide and diffused, and there are many different species or kinds of justice. In as far as it concerns the public and common good, it is called legal justice; in so far as it influences all the other virtues, it is called a general virtue, although it does not partake of the nature of the rest. In so far however as justice is employed for one determined object and by individuals to preserve the rights of each, it is called particular or special justice.

554. This virtue, in all its parts or kinds, the Empress of heaven exercised toward all creatures in an eminent degree; for She alone knew by her greater enlightenment, all its obligations and comprehended them perfectly. Although this virtue does not directly have anything to do with the natural passions, as is the case with fortitude and temperance, yet in many instances, precisely on account of the failure to moderate and regulate the passions, justice toward the neighbor is set aside. This

happens with those, who out of disorderly covetousness or lust usurp what does not belong to them. But as in the most holy Mary there were no disorderly passions nor any ignorance of proper measure to be maintained according to justice, She fulfilled all justice toward each person, and showed the way of justice to all who were privileged to hear from her mouth the words and doctrine of eternal life. As far as legal justice is concerned, She not only observed it to the letter by obeying the common laws, as She did in the purification and other prescriptions of the old Law, although, on account of being the Queen and free from sin, She was exempt from them; but no one except her most holy Son, ever advanced so much as She the public and common good of morals. For toward this end She directed all her virtues and operations, earning thereby the divine mercy for mankind and benefiting her neighbor in many other ways.

555. Also the distributive and commutative justice belonged to most holy Mary in a heroic degree. Distributive justice regulates the distribution of the common goods to individual persons. This justice her Highness observed in many affairs, which were left to her authority and management in the primitive Chuch: as for instance in the distribution of the common property for the sustenance and other necessities of each person. Although She never distributed money, (for that She never handled), yet She gave her orders and at other times her counsel for its just application. On these and similar occasions, She always acted up to strict equity and justice, according to the necessities and the circumstances of each one's condition. The same She also observed in the distribution of offices and ministerial dignities among the Apostles and the first children of the Church in their

meetings and assemblies. All these things this most wise Teacher ordered and arranged with perfect equity; for besides her ordinary knowledge and insight into the dispositions of each of her subjects, She made use of prayer and of the divine enlightenment. On this account the Apostles and others, whom She governed, had recourse to Her for direction and counsel, and whatever was done under her direction, was disposed of in perfect equity and without acceptation of persons.

556. Commutative justice procures reciprocal equality in that which is given and received by individuals; as for instance observing the rule: to offer gift for gift, etc., or value for value. This kind of justice the Queen of heaven had fewer opportunities of exercising, than other virtues; for She never bought or sold anything for Herself. If it was necessary to buy or commute any article, it was done by the patriarch saint Joseph, while he lived, and afterwards by saint John the evangelist, or some of the Apostles. The Master of sanctity, who came to destroy and eradicate avarice (I Tim. 6, 10) the root of all evil, wished to remove from Himself and from his most holy Mother all those negotiations and transactions, in which the fire of human covetousness is enkindled and preserved. Therefore his Providence ordained, that neither his own hand nor that of his purest Mother should be soiled by the transactions of human commerce in buying and selling, even if only of things necessary for the preservation of human life. However the Queen did not omit to teach men this virtue of commutative justice, directing in the way of perfect justice all those, who in the apostolate and primitive Church were engaged in such affairs.

557. This virtue of justice comprises also other kinds of activity in regard to the neighbor, such as judging

others in the public and civil courts, or in private. Our Savior refers to the contrary vice, when he says in saint Matthew: "Judge not that you may not be judged" (Matt. 7, 1). These judgments are formed by each one according to the estimate which is in his own mind: therefore they are just judgments, if they are conformable to reason, and unjust, if they disagree with it. Our sovereign Queen never exercised the office of a public or civil judge, although She had the power to be the judge of all the universe; but by her most equitous counsels during the time of her life, and afterwards through her intercession, She fulfilled what was written about Her in the proverbs: "I walk in the paths of justice and through me the mighty decree justice" (Prov. 8, 20, 16).

558. As regards particular judgments no injustice ever could find a place in the most pure heart of most holy Mary; for She could never be imprudent in her suspicions, or rash in her judgments, nor was She troubled by doubts; nor, if She had any, would She ever decide them unkindly for the worse part. These vices of injustice are proper and natural as it were to the children of Adam, who are dominated and enslaved by the disorderly passions of hate, envy, illnatured emulation, and other evil inclinations. From these bad roots sprout unjust suspicions with slight foundations, rash judgments and prejudiced solution of doubts; for each one easily presumes in his brother his own faults. Because they are filled with hate and envy at the prosperity of their neighbor, and rejoice at his misfortune, they lightly give belief, where there are no grounds, only yielding to their bad desires, and allowing their judgments to drift in accordance with their wishes. From all these consequences of sin our Queen was free, as She had no part in sin: all was charity, purity, sanctity and perfect love, whatever

entered or came from the sanctuary of her heart: in Her was all the grace of truth and the way of life (Eccli. 24, 25). In the plenitude of her sanctity and science She doubted nothing, She suspected nothing; for She was aware of all the secrets hidden in the hearts of men and searched their souls with the light of truth and mercy, not suspecting evil and never attributing blame, where none was due. On the contrary She was solicitous to excuse the sins of men, in justice and equity yielding to each and every one his dues. Her most earnest desire was to fill all men with the sweetness and the graciousness of her virtues.

559. In the two different kinds of commutative and distributive justice there are contained many other kinds or species of virtues, but I will only refer to them in so far as to say, that all of them, both as habits and as acts, were possessed by the most holy Mary in the highest and most excellent degree. Some of these virtues are related to justice, because they are exercised in our intercourse with our neighbor and partake to a certain extent, though not in all their bearings, of the nature of justice; either because we are unable to pay fully what we owe, or because, if we are able, the debt or obligation is not so strict as that which is incurred by commutative or distributive justice. I will not enter upon a full explanation of these virtues, since they are various and numerous; but in order not to pass them over entirely, I will give a short summary, so as to show how our Sovereign and most high Princess was adorned with all of them.

560. It is a just obligation to give worship and reverence to those, who are placed above us. According to the greatness of their excellence and their dignity and according to the benefits which we receive at their hands,

varies also our obligation and the reverence which we owe them, although no return on our part can equal the benefit or the dignity. The first virtue of this kind is that of religion, by which we give to God due worship and reverence, though his magnificence and his gifts exceed infinitely all that we will ever be able to return in thanks or praise. Among the moral virtues this one is the most noble on account of its object, namely the worship of God, and its subject matter is as extensive as there are ways and means of directly praising and reverencing God. In this virtue of religion are comprehended all the interior acts of prayer, contemplation and devotion, with all their parts, conditions, causes, effects and purposes. Among exterior actions, latria, which is the supreme outward adoration due only to God, falls under this head, and with it also all its different kinds of parts, namely: sacrifices, oblations, tithes and vows, oaths, exterior and vocal offering of praise. For in all these actions, if they are performed in the proper manner, God is honored and reverenced by the creatures, just as He is very much offended in the contrary vices.

561. The second virtue falling under the above class is piety, by which we are inclined to honor our parents, to whom after God we owe our being and our education. By it we also show proper regard for those, who participate in a manner of the quality of parents, such as for instance our relatives, or our country, which sustains and governs us. This virtue is so important, that we must prefer its dictates to the acts of supererogation in the virtue of religion. So Christ the Lord teaches us in saint Matthew, when He reprehended the pharisees for setting aside piety toward their parents under the pretext of the worship of God. In the third place must be mentioned veneration, which inclines us to give honor

and reverence to those, who possess some superior excellence or dignity of a different kind from that of our parents or fatherland. This virtue the doctors divide into two kinds: dulia and obedience. Dulia is the veneration due to those who participate to a certain measure in the majesty and dominion of the highest Lord God, to whom is due, as we said above, the worship of adoration or latria. Therefore we honor the saints by the reverence called dulia, and likewise those in the higher dignities, to whom we subject ourselves as servants. Obedience is the subjection of our will, inducing us to do the will of our superior in preference to our own. Our free will is so estimable, that this virtue is admirable and excellent above all the moral virtues; for the sacrifice is greater than in any other.

562. These three virtues of religion, piety and veneration (observantia) were possessed by Mary in such great plenitude and perfection, that nothing possible pertaining to them was wanting. What intellect can ever comprehend the honor, veneration and worship with which this Lady served her most beloved Son, adoring Him as true God and Man, as Creator, Redeemer, Glorifier, the Highest, the Infinite, the Immense in essence, in goodness and in all attributes? She knew more of Him than any other creature and more than all of them together; and according to her knowledge She rendered due honor, teaching even the Seraphim how to reverence Him. In this virtue She was so great a Teacher, that merely to see Her was sufficient to rouse, urge and incite all by a secret force to worship the supreme Lord and Author of heaven and earth; and without any other effort on her part She induced many to praise God. Her prayers, contemplations and devotions, together with the wonderful effects and the power of her intercession, are known to all the

angels and saints, but cannot be comprehended by them, exciting their endless admiration. To Her all the intellectual creatures are indebted, since She satisfied and made recompense not only for that which they have culpably neglected in this regard, but also for that which they could never attain, or execute, or merit. This Lady outraced the salvation of the world, and if She had not been in it, the eternal Word would not have issued from the bosom of the Father. She excelled the seraphim from her first instant in contemplation, in prayer, in petition, and in devout promptitude for the service of God. She offered the proper sacrifice, gave oblations and tithes; and all this in such a perfect manner, that nothing on the part of men was more acceptable next to that of her most holy Son. In the ceaseless praise, hymns, canticles and vocal prayers, which She offered, She was above all the Patriarchs and Prophets; and if in the Church militant Her doings were known as in the Church triumphant, they would be the admiration of the world.

563. The virtues of piety and veneration her Majesty exercised in proportion as She knew how to estimate better her obligation toward her parents and their heroic sanctity. The same was true in regard to her relations. For instance, She procured special graces for John the Baptist and his mother, for holy Elisabeth and some others in the apostolate. Certainly, if her fatherland had not been made unworthy of favor by the ingratitude and hardheartedness of its inhabitants, She would have made it the most fortunate country on earth; nevertheless, in as far as the Most High permitted, She conferred upon it great benefits and favors, both spiritual and material. In reverence toward the priests She was admirable, for She alone knew and could set proper value on the dignity of the anointed of the Lord. She has taught us all in this

matter, and also how to honor the Patriarchs, Prophets and Saints, as well as the temporal masters and those in authority. She omitted no act pertaining to these virtues, being solicitous according to time and opportunity to instruct others in the exercise of them, especially the first faithful in the establishment of the evangelical Church. There, obeying not any more the verbal commands of her most holy Son, or of her husband, but submitting to her Son's substitutes, She became an example to the world of a new kind of obedience; for in those times, not She owed obedience to any creature, but the whole earth, in an especial manner, owed obedience to Her, since She was staying upon it as its Queen and Mistress for the very purpose of governing it.

564. There are other virtues, which can also be classed under the head of justice; for they dispose us to yield to others that which we owe them on account of some moral obligation, founded upon an honest and just title. These virtues are: gratitude or thankfulness, truth or veracity, vindication, liberality, friendship or affability. By gratitude we create a certain equality of ourselves with those from whom we have received benefits giving them thanks in return, according to the nature of the benefits and the kindness, with which they were bestowed (which after all is the most valuable part of the benefit). The grateful also take into account the position and dignity of the benefactor. Gratitude bears in mind all these elements and can be manifested in different ways. Veracity inclines us to be truthful in all our intercourse, as is proper in human life and conversation, avoiding all lying, (which is never allowed), deceitful simulation, hypocrisy, boastfulness and irony. These vices are all opposed to truth; and though it is possible and even advisable to minimize when we are speaking of our own excellence or

virtue in order not to offend by boasting, yet it is not right to do so by telling a falsehood, imputing vice to ourselves untruthfully. Vindication is a virtue, which teaches us to recompense or make up for damage done by ourselves or by the neighbor, satisfying for it by some punishment. Among mortals the practice of this virtue is difficult; for they are so much moved by immoderate anger and dislike of their brethren, and so tardy in charity and justice, this vindication of the particular or general wellbeing is no unimportant virtue. Christ our Lord made use of this virtue, when He expelled from the temple those, who desecrated it by their irreverence (John 2, 15); Elias and Eliseus drew down fire from heaven in order to chastise some sins (IV King 1, 20); and in the Proverbs it is said: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son" (Prov. 13, 24). Liberality or generosity serves to distribute in a reasonable manner money or other goods, without falling into the vices of prodigality or niggardliness. Friendship or affability consists in conversing and acting in a decent and becoming manner toward all, without quarreling or flattery, which are the vices opposed to friendship.

565. None of these virtues, nor any others which might be related to justice, were wanting to the Queen of heaven; of all these She had the habit and practiced them as occasion offered. Moreover as the Teacher and Mistress of all sanctity She instructed and enlightened many souls how they were to exercise and practice them with the greatest perfection. The virtue of gratitude toward God She exercised by acts of religion and worship, as we have already described: for this is the best way to show our gratitude toward Him: and as the dignity of the most pure Mary and her concomitant sanctity was exalted above all created understanding, this eminent Mistress gave a return of gratitude proportionate to his benefits

within the measure possible to a creature. The same holds true in regard to her piety toward her parents and her country, as mentioned above. To her fellowmen this most humble Princess returned thanks for each favor as if She deserved no consideration from any one; and, although all favors were due to Her in justice, She nevertheless gave thanks for them with gracious affability. She alone knew and practiced this virtue to such an extent, as to return thanks for injuries and offenses as if they were great benefits; for in her incomparable humility She never recognized anything as an injury and considered Herself under obligation for what really were such. Moreover, as She never forgot any benefit, She also never ceased in her gratitude.

566. About the truthfulness of Mary our Lady, little need be said, since She who was so superior to the demon, the father of lies and deceit, could not tolerate even the shadow of that despicable vice. The standard, by which the virtue of truthfulness is to be measured in our Queen, is her dove-like charity and simplicity, which excluded all duplicity or deceit in her intercourse with creatures. And how could the guilt of deceit be found in the mouth of that Lady, who with one word of truest humility falling from her lips drew down to her womb that One, who is essential truth and holiness? In regard to the exercise of the virtue called vindication the most holy Mary likewise was proficient: not only instructing others as a Teacher during the time of the first beginnings of the evangelical Church; but zealously advancing the honor of the Most High and trying to convert many sinners through fraternal correction, as was the case in regard to Judas many times, and commanding the creatures, (which were obedient to her wishes), to punish some of the sinners in order that they might be converted and be saved from the eternal punishment due to their sins. Al-

though on these occasions She was most sweet and kind in her punishments, yet She did not remit them, whenever necessary to secure an effective cleansing from sin. Most of all however did She exercise retribution toward the demon, in order to free the human race from his slavery.

567. The sovereign Queen practiced also the most exalted liberality and friendliness. Her generosity in giving and distributing was on a scale befitting the Empress of all creation and one who knows the proper value of all invisible and visible things. This Lady never possessed anything of her own that She did not consider just as much the property of her neighbor as hers nor did She ever deny anything to anybody, not even waiting till they should pay the price of asking for it, whenever She could be beforehand in giving. The poverty and miseries which She alleviated, the benefits which She bestowed, the mercies which flowed from Her, even as regards only temporal matters, could not be recounted in an immense volume. Her amiable friendliness toward all creatures was so singular and admirable, that, if She had not concealed it with rare prudence, She would have drawn to Herself all the world, entranced by her most sweet intercourse; her mildness and kindness, though tempered by a divine seriousness and wisdom, displayed in her intercourse the marks of superhuman excellence. The Most High himself regulated this perfection in Her, allowing at times some of the signs of the sacrament of the King to show themselves, but taking care, that the veil should fall immediately and again conceal the mystery beneath earthly labors, thus forestalling the applause of men. All their honors were far below that which She deserved, and men would never be able to attain, and would fall either below or exceed, the correct measure of honor due to One who was at the same time a creature and the Mother of God. This was reserved for the time when as

children of the Church, men should be enlightened by the Catholic faith.

568. For the adequate and perfect exercise of this great virtue of justice the doctors point out another part or aid to it, which they call epikeia, which guides us in some affairs, that are above the common and ordinary rules and laws. For not all affairs, with their varying circumstances, can be covered by the ordinary laws, and therefore it is necessary to proceed on certain occasions by the light of a superior and extraordinary reasoning. This part of justice the sovereign Queen practiced on many occasions during her life, both before, and especially after the Ascension of her onlybegotten Son. In order to regulate the affairs of the primitive Church, as I will say in its place, She often made use of epikeia, as required by the interests of the Most High.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

569. In this extensive virtue of Justice, my daughter, although thou hast been taught much of its value, thou still art ignorant of the greater part of it on account of thy condition in this state of mortality; and therefore also this thy account of it is insufficient for a full understanding of its excellence. Nevertheless thou hast in it a copious summary to direct thy intercourse with creatures and thy worship of the Most High. In regard to this latter I remind thee, my dearest, that the supreme majesty of the Omnipotent is highly indignant at the offenses of mortals, who forget the veneration, adoration, and reverence due to Him. If some of them do render it, it is so coarse, inattentive and discourteous, that they do not merit reward but chastisement. They revere and adore profoundly the princes and magnates of the earth; they ask favors and seek to obtain them with the utmost diligence; they are effusive in their thanks, when they succeed, pro-

testing their lifelong gratitude. But the supreme Lord, who gives them being, life and activity, who preserves and sustains them, who has redeemed them and raised them to the dignity of sons, who wishes to confer upon them his own glory, who is in Himself the infinite and the highest Good; Him, the highest Majesty, they forget, because they cannot see Him with their corporal eyes. As if not all good came from Him, they return, at the highest, merely a sluggish remembrance and a hasty thanksgiving. I will not even mention at present, how much those offend the most just Ruler of the universe, who wickedly break through and overturn all the order of justice toward their neighbor, perverting the whole natural order in wishing to their brothers, what they would not wish for themselves.

570. Abhor, my daughter, such execrable conduct, and as far as thy forces will allow, make up by thy works for this want of acknowledgment in the service of the Most High. And as by thy state of life thou art consecrated to the divine worship, let that be thy principal occupation and delight, striving to imitate the angelic spirits in their ceaseless fear and worship of the Lord. Preserve reverence for holy things, including also the ornaments and sacred vessels used in divine service. During divine office, prayer, and sacrifice see that thou remain on thy knees; implore with faith and receive his favors with humble thanksgiving; the same consideration thou shouldst show also to all men, even if they offend thee. To all be kind, affable, meek, simple and truthful; without deceit or double-dealing, without detraction or illwill, without rash judgment of thy neighbor. And in order that thou mayst fulfill all justice, revive the memory of it constantly and desire to do to thy neighbor that which thou wishest done to thyself. Especially remember how my most holy Son, and I in imitation of Him, acted toward all men.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE, AS PRACTICED BY THE MOST HOLY MARY.

571. The virtue of fortitude, which is the third of the four cardinal virtues, serves to moderate the personal activity of each one's choleric affections. Although it is true that concupiscence precedes irascibility, and therefore temperance which regulates concupiscence, might seem to precede fortitude, because the resistance pertaining to fortitude is exerted against that which opposes concupiscence; nevertheless we must first treat of the activity of the choleric affections and their moderation through fortitude. For in the pursuit of that which is desired, success ordinarily depends upon the intervention of the irascible faculties for overcoming the obstacles that present themselves. Therefore fortitude is a more noble and excellent virtue than temperance, of which we shall treat in the following chapter.

572. The moderation of the irascible passions by the virtue of fortitude is made up of two elements or kinds of activity: to give way to anger in conformity with reason, propriety and honor, and to repress unreasonable anger and passion, whenever it is more useful to restrain than to allow them to act. For as well the one as the other can be praiseworthy or blamable according to the end in view and the circumstances of the affair in hand. The first of these two kinds of operations of this virtue is properly called fortitude, being called by some teachers pugnacity (bellicositas). The second is called patience,

which is the more noble and excellent kind of fortitude, and is possessed and exercised principally by the saints: the worldly-minded, throwing aside good judgment and usurping a false term, are apt to call patience pusillanimity, and miscall inconsiderate and rash presumption, fortitude. Thus it comes, that they never attain the true practice of the virtue of fortitude.

573. In most holy Mary there were no inordinate movements, which could call to activity the irascible affections for the exercise of fortitude; for in the most innocent Queen all the passions were well ordered and subject to reason, and her reason was subject to God, who governed Her in all her actions and movements. But She was in need of this virtue in order to overcome the obstacles placed by the devil in diverse ways, seeking to prevent Her from attaining what She most prudently and most properly desired for Herself and her most holy Son. And in this most valiant resistance and conflict none of the creatures ever showed more fortitude. For no one ever encountered such conflicts and opposition as She from the demon. But whenever it became necessary to make use of this kind of fortitude or pugnacity with human creatures, She was equally sweet and forcible, or rather, She was just as irresistible as She was most sweet in her activity. For this heavenly Lady alone among all creatures was able to copy so faithfully in her operations that attribute of the Most High, which unites irresistible power with heavenly sweetness (Wisdom 8, 1). Thus our Queen proceeded in her actions with fortitude, knowing no disorderly fear in her generous heart, as She was superior to all creation. Neither was She rash, or audacious, or immoderate, being alike removed from all these vicious extremes; for in her great wisdom She knew what terrors were to be vanquished, and what rashness was to

be avoided. Thus She was the chosen Woman, clothed in the strength of fortitude and beauty (Prov. 31, 25).

574. That part of fortitude which consists in patient endurance, most holy Mary practiced in a still more admirable manner, for She alone participated in the excellent patience of her most holy Son, who bore punishment and suffered innocently without guilt, and in a greater measure than all those who had contracted the guilt. The whole life of the sovereign Queen was a continual suffering and tribulation, especially during the life and passion of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Her patience during this time exceeds the comprehension of all creatures; and only the Lord who imposed this suffering upon Her, could worthily understand its greatness. Never was this most pure Dove excited to the least impatience against any creature, nor did any of the immense tribulations and sorrows of her life seem great to Her, nor was She ever dejected on account of them, nor did She fail to accept them all with joy and gratitude. If, according to the Apostle, the first requisite of charity, and as it were its firstborn, is patience (I Cor. 13, 4); and if our Queen was the Mother of love (Prov. 24, 24), then She was also the Mother of patience, and her love is the measure of her patience. For in the degree in which we love and esteem the eternal good, (and we should esteem it above all visible things), in that degree will we be ready, in order to obtain it and avoid the loss of it, to suffer all hardships in patience. Hence most holy Mary in her love was patient beyond all that is created and She was the Mother of patience for us. Flying to her protection we shall find the tower of David with its thousand shields of patience pending from it (Cant. 4, 4), with which the brave ones of the Church and of the militia of Christ our Lord arm themselves for battle.

575. Our most patient Queen was never affected by the caprices of feminine inconstancy, nor indulged in outward signs of anger; all this She restrained by the aid of divine light and wisdom, although these latter did not do away with pain, but rather augmented it; for no one could recognize the infinite misfortune of sins and offenses against God as this Lady. But even so her invincible heart could not be disturbed: neither the malice of Judas, nor the injuries and insults of the pharisees could ever cause signs of anger in her exterior. Although at the death of her most holy Son all the insensible elements and creatures seemed to have lost patience toward mortals, not being able to suffer the injuries and offenses done to their Creator, Mary alone remained unmoved and ready to receive Judas, all the pharisees and high-priests who crucified Christ, if they had chosen to return to this Mother of piety and mercy.

576. It is true that, without thereby passing the bounds of reason or virtue, the most meek Queen could justly have been indignant and angry at those who delivered over her most holy Son to such a frightful death; for the Lord himself punished this sin in his justice. While following up this thought, I was informed, that the Most High provided against these movements and kept Her free from all motions and affections of anger, though they would not have been unjust; for He wished to prevent Her from being the accuser of these sinners, because He had chosen Her as the Mediatrix and Advocate, the Mother of mercy. Through Her were to flow all the mercies which He wished to grant to all the children of Adam. He wished Her to be the one Creature, that could worthily intercede for sin and temper the wrath of the just Judge. Solely against the demon the anger of this Lady was given free scope. Also in so far as this passion

was necessary to exercise patience and forbearance and to overcome the impediments with which this enemy and ancient serpent obstructed her beneficent course.

577. To this virtue of fortitude belong also magnanimity and magnificence because they in a manner partake of the nature of this virtue by giving firmness to the will in matters relating to fortitude. Magnanimity consists in pursuing great things and thus striving after the great honors of virtue. Its subject matter is therefore great honorableness, from which arise many qualities peculiar to the magnanimous; as for instance to abhor flattery and the pretenses of hypocrisy, (for to love these is the part of small and mean souls), not to be covetous, selfishly looking only for usefulness, but rather to seek honorable and great things; to speak little of one's self, not to brag, and not to be easily taken up by small things, and not to avoid the greater undertakings, to be more inclined to give than to receive; for all these things are worthy of honor. But this virtue is not on this account opposed to humility, for one virtue cannot be opposed to another. Magnanimity causes us to use our gifts and virtues in such a way as to merit the greater honor, without at the same time seeking honor anxiously and unreasonably. Humility on the other hand teaches us our relation to God and the smallness of our desert caused by our defects and our own lowly nature. On account of the special difficulties connected with great and noble undertakings, fortitude, especially the fortitude called magnanimity, is necessary. This proportions our forces to the execution of great works, neither allowing us to desist from them in pusillanimity, nor to attempt them with presumption, disorderly ambition, or vainglory; for all these vices magnanimity abhors.

578. Magnificence similarly points to the execution of

great deeds, and in this signification it may enter into the perfection of every virtue, for in all virtues great things may be undertaken. But as there is a special difficulty in great outlays or sacrifices, magnificence more particularly is that virtue, which inclines us to make great sacrifices in the prudent manner, so that there be neither niggardliness, where much is required, nor profuseness where there is no need, wasting and destroying without necessity. Although this seems to be the same virtue as liberality, yet the philosophers distinguish one from the other. Magnificence regards only the greatness of the cost, without attending to other circumstances, whereas liberality regulates the temperate love and use of money. One can therefore be liberal without being magnificent, as liberality may stop short of its course, when there is question of great and important favors.

579. These virtues of magnanimity and magnificence were possessed by the Queen of heaven in a manner, unattainable by others capable of these virtues. Mary alone found no difficulty or hindrance in accomplishing great things; and She alone did everything on a grand scale, even though the matter was small in itself. She alone understood the full bearing of these virtues, as She did of all the rest. She could give them their full perfection, without gaging them by any contrary inclinations, nor was She ignorant of the perfect manner of exercising, nor of making them dependent upon the assistance of other virtues. For this is wont to happen with most holy and prudent men, who, when they cannot attain entire perfection in all virtue, choose that which seems to be the best of them. In all her practice of virtues this Lady was so magnanimous, that She always performed that which was most excellent and worthy of honor and commendation. Yet though She deserved honor and praise from all

creatures, She was nevertheless most magnanimous in despising it and referring it to God alone, and She preserved her humility while practicing the highest perfection of virtue. The acts of her heroic humility stood as it were in heavenly rivalry with the magnanimous excellence of all her other virtues and were like richest jewels set in contrast with the beauteous variety of excellences that adorned the Daughter of the King, whose glory, as David, her father, had said (Psalm 44, 14), is all from within.

580. Also in magnificence our Queen greatly excelled. For although She was poor and without any affection toward earthly things, nevertheless She dispensed most freely those things, with which the Lord furnished Her, as happened with the precious gifts, which the Magi offered to the Child Jesus, and many times afterwards in the course of her life after the Lord had ascended to heaven. As Mistress of all creation She also showed her great magnificence by willingly yielding the whole of it for the common benefit and for the honor and the worship of God. Many She instructed in this doctrine and virtue, which, on account of their vile customs and inclinations mortals practice with so much difficulty, and in which they never reach the proper perfection of prudence. Commonly mortals follow their inclinations and desires, seeking only the honor and emoluments of virtue, and to be esteemed as great and extraordinary. The honor and glory of virtue is thus diverted from the Lord by their wrongful hankering; and consequently, when any occasion presents itself for the performance of a magnanimous and generous deed, they shrink back and fail to execute it, on account of the littleness and meanness of their sentiments. As their desire of seeming great, excellent and worthy of admiration nevertheless remains,

they have recourse to other measures, proportionably deceitful and really vicious, such as getting angry, showing arrogance, impatience, haughtiness, dislike and boastfulness. However, these vices are not a part of magnanimity, but of smallness and meanness of heart. Hence, as such conduct and sentiments repel rather than attract honor, they do not gain the honor and esteem of the wise, but contempt and abhorrence.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

581. My daughter, if thou seekest attentively to obtain a full understanding of the excellence and the propriety of the virtue of fortitude, as is my wish, thou shalt come into the possession of a most efficient check for the guiding of thy irascible affections; for these are the passions, which are most easily moved to action and are most apt to overstep the bounds of reason. Thou shalt also have the means of attaining to the utmost greatness and perfection of virtue, which thou desirest, and of resisting and overcoming all the machinations of thy enemies, who seek to intimidate thee in the pursuit of what is hard in perfection. But understand, my dearest, that the irascible in thy nature assists the concupiscible by opposing what is hostile to the object sought after by the concupiscible powers. On this account the irascible will deteriorate much faster than the concupiscible as soon as the concupiscible affections become disordered and begin to love what is only apparently good or what is vicious. In place of a virtuous fortitude many execrable and deformed vices will then result. This will also teach thee that disorderly love of one's own excellence and distinction, and vainglory, which are the sources of pride and vanity, will breed many vices peculiar to the irascible passions, such as discords, conten-

tions, quarrels, boasting, strife, impatience, obstinacy; moreover also vices peculiar to the concupiscible passions, such as hypocrisy, lying, vain strivings, curiosity and the desire to appear more than is befitting to a creature, and to conceal the meanness which truly belongs to one who has committed sins. From all these contemptible vices thou shalt keep thyself free, if thou wilt earnestly mortify and restrain the inordinate movements of concupiscence by virtue of temperance, which I will now teach thee. For when thou strivest after that which is just and useful, although thou must make use of fortitude and of the well-ordered irascible passions, it must always be done in such a way as not to pass the proper bounds; and there is continual danger of allowing oneself to be carried away by inordinate zeal for virtue, when one is subject to self-love or any disorderly love. Sometimes this vice disguises itself and hides under the cloak of a pious zeal, and its victims, anxious to appear zealous for God and the good of their neighbor, are in reality deceived and ensnared into anger by selfish motives. On this account the patience, which is founded in charity and which is accompanied by generosity and magnanimity, is very honorable, estimable and necessary; for he that really loves the highest and truest Good, easily bears the loss of apparent honor and glory, despising it with magnanimity as vile and contemptible. Even when it is freely given by his fellow creatures, the magnanimous will set no value on it; he will show himself invincible and constant in all his undertakings. Thus he will advance, according to his opportunities, in the virtues of perseverance and patience.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE AS PRACTICED BY THE MOST HOLY MARY.

583. In regard to good and evil man possesses two tendencies: namely that of striving after the good and of repelling the evil; the latter is regulated by fortitude, which, as already demonstrated, serves to strengthen the will against the immoderate exercise of the irascible faculties and inspires it with bold daring rather to suffer all possible afflictions of the senses than to desist from the attainment of the good. The other tendency, founded on the concupiscible faculties, is regulated by temperance, and this is the last and the least of the cardinal virtues; for the good which it procures is not so universal as that attained by the practice of other virtues, since temperance directly is concerned only with the particular advantage of its possessor. The doctors and teachers treat of temperance in another aspect: namely in so far as it can regulate the action of all the natural appetites of man; in this respect temperance is a general and universal virtue which comprises within its scope the proper exercise of all the virtues according to reason. We do not at present speak of this general virtue of temperance, but only of that temperance which serves to regulate the concupiscence of touch and other pleasurable concupiscences indirectly related to the touch, but not presenting such powerful attractions as the concupiscence of the flesh.

584. In this regard temperance holds the last place among the virtues, its aim being less noble than that of

others; yet in other regards it may be said to have greater excellence, namely in as far as it preserves man from viler and more contemptible transgressions, namely from the immoderate indulgence of those pleasures which are common to men and the irrational brutes. Referring to this David says that man has become like unto the beast (Psalm 48, 13, 21), allowing himself to be carried away by the pleasure of the senses. Intemperance is rightly called a puerile vice; for, just as a child is not guided by reason, but by the spur of fancy, and does not restrain itself, except through fear of chastisement, so also concupiscence cannot otherwise be checked in the indulgence of its desires. From this dishonor and vileness man is freed by the virtue of temperance, which teaches him to govern himself not by his desires, but by reason. Therefore a certain decorous honorableness and comeliness distinguish this virtue, by which the reason is enabled to preserve its rule, although the indomitable passions are hardly ever inclined to listen or yield to it willingly. On the other hand, the subjection of man to beastly pleasures is a great dishonor, degrading him to the position of an irrational animal or of an unreasoning child.

585. Temperance includes the two virtues of abstinence and sobriety; the former being opposed to gluttony and the latter to drunkenness. Abstinence also includes fasting. These virtues take the first place in treating of temperance; for nourishment, being necessary for the preservation of life, is among the principal objects coveted by the appetites. After these follow others which regulate the use of the faculties for reproduction of the species, such as chastity and susceptibility to shame, with their concomitant virginity and continence, opposed to the vices of lust and incontinence and their species. Besides these virtues, which are the principal ones belonging

to temperance, there are others that regulate the appetite in the less important desires. Those that regulate the sensations of smell, hearing and sight, may be classed under those referring to the proper use of the sense of touch. But there are still other kinds of virtues which resemble some of the above, though their object is entirely different, such as clemency and meekness, which are set to govern anger and wrath in the administration of punishment, lest they turn into bestial and inhuman cruelty. Then there is modesty, which includes four virtues; the first one is humility, which keeps down pride, lest man seek in a disorderly manner his own exaltation and honor before men; the second is studiousness, by which one preserves the proper measure in seeking information, being opposed to vain curiosity. The third is moderation or frugality, by which one avoids superfluous expense and ostentation in regard to clothing and exterior living; the fourth is the restraint of overindulgence in pleasurable entertainment, such as playing, bodily exercise, dancing, jesting and the like. Although this virtue seems to have no special name, it is of the greatest importance. It goes under the generic name of modesty or temperance.

586. It always seems to me when I describe the excellence of these and of the other virtues when applied to the corresponding virtues of the Queen of heaven, that the terms at my disposal and commonly used in order to describe these virtues in other creatures, fall far below the truth. The graces and gifts of the most holy Mary were in closer correspondence with those of the divine perfections, than all the virtues and the holiness of the saints are with those of the sovereign Queen of virtues. Thence it no doubt happens that whatever we can say of her virtues by using the terms fit for describing the vir-

tues of the saints, seems to fall far short of the truth; for the latter, as great as they may have been, existed in persons disordered and subject to imperfections and the distempers of sin. When therefore Ecclesiasticus says (Eccli. 26, 20), that we can have no true conception of the excellence of the continent man, what shall we say of the virtue of temperance in the Mistress of all virtues, and what of the beauty of that soul which contained the perfection of all virtues? All the domestics of this strong Woman were doubly clothed (Prov. 31, 21) because all her faculties were clothed in two vestments or perfections of incomparable beauty and strength; the one, that of original justice, which subjected all the appetites to reason and grace; the other that of the infused habits, which supplied new beauty and strength for the attainment of highest perfection in her works.

587. All the saints that have signalized themselves in the beauty of temperance, obtained the full conquest over the indomitable concupiscences by subjecting them in such a manner to the rule of reason, as not to allow their desires to reach out after anything that might afterwards occasion them sorrow for having desired it. They advanced so far, that they denied themselves all indulgence in those concupiscences, which could be withdrawn without destroying human nature. Nevertheless in all these exercises of the virtue of temperance they felt a certain opposition within themselves, which retarded the perfect assent of the will, or at least a certain resistance preventing them from reaching the plenitude of perfection in their actions. They complained with the Apostle of the unhappy burden of this body of sin (Rom. 7, 24). In most holy Mary no such dissonance could be traced; for without a murmur of the appetites and without a shadow

of repugnance of the dictates of her will, all her powers acted in such harmony and concert that, like armies marching in well ordered squadrons (Cant. 6, 3), they moved on in heavenly unison. As She had no rebellious passions to overcome, She exercised such great temperance in all her actions, that not even the suggestion of disorder ever entered her mind. On the contrary her activity so closely imitated the divine operations that they seemed originated and drawn directly from this supreme Source, turning toward it as the only rule and ultimate end of all her perfections.

588. The abstinence and sobriety of most holy Mary was the admiration of the angels; for though being the Queen of all creation and experiencing the natural affections of hunger and thirst, She never sought after the delicacies that would have suited her high estate, nor ever indulged in nourishment merely for the sake of the pleasures of taste, but only in order to supply her natural wants. Even these She satisfied with such moderation as never to exceed, or ever being capable of exceeding, the exact measure necessary to preserve the radical humors of life. Moreover She partook of nourishment in such a way as to allow room for hunger and thirst and so as to make allowance for the effects of grace on the natural process of bodily nourishment. She never experienced the changes of corruption arising from superfluous eating or drinking; nor did her needs in this regard grow greater on one day than on others; nor was She more subject to these changes on account of the want of food; for if at any time She detracted from the food necessary to keep up the natural warmth, She was supplemented in her activity by divine grace, in which the creature lives, not in bread alone (Matth. 4, 4). The Lord could have sustained Her without food or drink,

but He did not do it; for it was not right that She should lose the merit of virtuously using these things, thus affording us the benefit of her example and merits. As to the kind of food and the time in which She partook of it, we will mention these circumstances in different parts of this history (Part II, 196, 424, 898). Of Her own choice She never ate meat, nor did She eat more than once a day, except when She lived with her husband Joseph, or when She accompanied her most holy Son in his travels; for in such circumstances, in order to conform Herself to others, She imitated the mode of living followed by the Lord, although at all times She was wonderful in her temperance.

589. Of the virginal purity and modesty of this Virgin of virgins not even the seraphim could speak worthily, for in this virtue, though to them it is co-natural, they were inferior to their Queen and Mistress. By the privilege and power of the Most High She was more free from the contrary vice than the angels themselves, who by their very nature could not be touched by impurity. Mortals will never in this life be able to form a proper idea of this virtue as it existed in the Queen of heaven; for we are much weighed down by the earthliness, and the pure and crystalline light of chastity is much obscured in our souls. Our great Queen possessed this virtue in such a degree that She might justly have preferred it even to the dignity of being the Mother of God, if this dignity had not been the very source of her great purity. Measuring this virginal purity of Mary by the esteem in which She held it, and by the dignity to which it raised Her, we can partly estimate how great was that virtue in her virginal body and soul. She resolved upon this purity from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, She vowed it at her nativity, and She

guarded it in such a manner that She never offended against it, or against the utmost modesty in any of her actions or movements, nor in any attitude of her body or soul. Accordingly She never spoke to any man except at the command of God; nor did She ever look into the face of a man, and not even in the face of a woman; and this not on account of any danger to Her, but for the sake of gaining merit, and for our example, and in order to exercise the superabundance of her heavenly prudence, wisdom and charity.

590. Of her clemency and meekness Solomon says that the law of clemency is on her tongue (Prov. 31, 26). She never moved it except in order to let flow the grace poured out on her lips (Psalm 44, 3). Meekness regulates wrath, and clemency moderates punishment. There was no anger in our most mild Queen, nor did She use the faculty of it except, as we have said above, in order to lend fortitude to her activity against sin and the devil or the like. But against men and the angels She made no use of anger for the purpose of punishing them, nor was She moved to anger by any event, nor did She ever on any account interrupt her most perfect practice of meekness, preserving inimitable and imperturbable equanimity both interiorly and exteriorly; neither did She ever show outward signs of inward anger in her countenance, in her voice or in her movements. Her mildness and clemency the Lord made use of as an instrument peculiarly his own, and through it He wished to scatter all his benefits of his ancient and everlasting mercies; on this account it was necessary that the clemency of Mary should imitate so closely his own as to make it a fit channel for the overflow of his divine clemency toward the creatures. When we consider attentively and once have understood well the works of the divine mercy toward sinners and when

we see that the most holy Mary was a fit instrument of their distribution and application, we will then partly understand the clemency of this Lady. All her corrections were undertaken more by pleading, teaching and admonishing than by chastisement; She herself besought the Lord, and He ordained that this be her course of action; for this incomparable Creature was to be the fountain of clemency and the depositary of the law of clemency, of which his Majesty should avail Himself, and from which mortals should draw this virtue as well as all the others.

591. To discourse worthily of the other virtues, especially of the humility and of the frugality and of the poverty of most holy Mary, many books and the tongues of angels would be required. Of these ineffable virtues of Mary this history is replete, for in all the actions of the Queen of heaven her incomparable humility shines forth beyond everything else. I fear extremely to understate the greatness of this singular virtue in the blessed Virgin by trying to encompass in the limited terms at my disposal, that ocean of humility which was able to contain and embrace the Incomprehensible and the Immense himself. All that the angels and the saints themselves could comprehend and practice of the virtue of humility, cannot equal even the least part of that which our Queen attained therein. Which of the saints or angels could ever merit the title of Mother of God? And who, beside Mary and the eternal Father, could ever address the incarnate Word as Son? If then She, who in this regard attained to a dignity like that of the eternal Father and possessed the graces and gifts befitting such a state, reputed Herself as the last of all creatures and all the rest as her superiors, what fragrance and odor of virtue did this humble spikenard exhale for the delight of God, while She bore in her womb the King of kings? (Cant. 1, 11).

592. That the pillars of heaven, the angels (Job 26, 11), should quake and tremble in the presence of the inaccessible light of the infinite Majesty, is not to be wondered at; for they had before their eyes the ruin of their companions, while they themselves were confirmed in the advantages and favors common to all. That the most valiant and invincible of the saints should humiliate themselves, embracing contempt and reproach, and acknowledging themselves unworthy of the least favors of grace, and even of the service and succor of the creatures outside themselves; all this was most just and only according to the natural order of things. For all of us have sinned and infringe on the glory of God (Rom. 3, 23); and no one is so holy that he cannot increase in sanctity; nor so perfect that some virtue is not wanting in him; nor so innocent, that the eyes of God find nothing to reprehend. And if any one should be of consummate perfection, he nevertheless would still remain within the sphere of the common graces and benefits, since no one is superior to all in all things.

593. But just on this account the humility of the most pure Mary was without example and without equal. For though She was the dawn of grace, the pure beginning of all creatures, the superior over them all, the prodigy of the divine perfections, the centre of his love, the sphere of the omnipotence of God, who called God her Son and was called by Him his Mother, She nevertheless humbled Herself to the lowest place in all creation. She, who enjoyed the highest position, exalted above all the works of God, so that no higher position was left for a mere creature, humiliated Herself so far as to judge Herself unworthy of the least estimation, distinction or honor, not even of such as would befit the most insignificant of the rational creatures. Not only did She deem Herself unworthy of

the dignity of being the Mother of God and of all the graces connected therewith, but She did not esteem Herself deserving of the air She breathed, of the support the earth gave to her footsteps, of the sustenance derived from it, or of any service or kindness at the hands of creatures; of all things She considered Herself unworthy and She gave thanks for all, as if She were really so undeserving. In order to say all in a few words: that a creature should not seek the honor which does not belong to it or which for some reason it does not merit, is not such a great humility, although the Most High in his infinite kindness accepts it and considers Himself under obligation to one who practices it in that way. But She, most admirably exceeding all this, while deserving all exaltation and majesty, humiliated Herself more than all other creatures and sought neither honor nor exaltation. Thus Mary, holding worthily the dignity of Mother of God, annihilated Herself, and by this very humility deserved anew and in justice to be raised to the dominion and sovereignty of all creation.

594. In proportion to this incomparable humility most holy Mary possessed also all the other virtues, which belong to modesty. The desire of knowing more than is necessary, ordinarily arises from the want of humility and charity. This is a fault not only of no use, but of great hindrance in the advancement of virtue, as happened with Dina (Gen. 24, 1), who, going out to see what was no benefit to her, suffered such great damage to her honor. From the same root of proud presumption usually also springs superfluous ostentation and finery in outward dress, and also the disorderly behavior in gesture and carriage, which serves sensuality and vanity, testifying to the levity of the heart according to the saying of Ecclesiasticus (19, 27): "The attire of the body and

the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man, show what he is." All the virtues opposed to these vices were in most holy Mary in their entirety, void of all disinclination or feebleness in the exercise of them. They were like companions of her profound humility, charity and purity, that revealed the certain tokens of a nature more heavenly than earthly.

595. She was most studious without being curious; for though She was replete with a wisdom far above that of the cherubim, She studied and allowed Herself to be taught as if ignorant of all things. Whenever She made use of her divine science or sought to learn the will of God, She was so prudent and attended so carefully and exactly to all circumstances that her efforts always wounded the heart of God and drew and inclined Him to fulfill her most well-ordered wishes. In poverty and frugality She was most admirable; for being the Mistress of all creation and having full right to dispose of it, She yielded all right of possession to the Lord in imitation of her most holy Son; namely, just as the Father gave all things into the hands of the incarnate Word, so the Word put all into the hands of his Mother, and She, similarly offered all things, as well in desire as in fact, for the glory of her Son and Lord. Of the modesty of her behavior and sweetness of her intercourse, and of all her exterior actions, it is sufficient to repeat what is asserted by the wise man of Athens, saint Dionysius, that She would have deserved to be looked upon as more than human, if faith did not teach that She is a mere creature.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

596. My daughter, thou hast said something of the virtue of temperance and of my practice of it, so far as thou hast understood its dignity and excellence. Yet thou

hast omitted much that belongs to a full understanding of the necessity of temperance in human actions. It was a punishment of the first sin that man lost the perfect use of reason, and that the passions should rise in rebellion against him, because he rose up against God in contempt of his most just command. In order to repair this damage, temperance became necessary; by it man restrains his concupiscences within proper bounds; he perceives the perfect medium in that which is desirable and he is taught to follow once more the dictates of reason, bringing him near to the Divinity and declining to follow his concupiscences like irrational beasts. Without this virtue it is not possible for man to divest himself of the spoiled human nature, nor to dispose himself for the graces and wisdom of God; for they will not enter into a soul subject to the body of sin (Wisdom 1, 4). He that knows how to moderate his passions by denying them their immoderate and bestial desires, will be able to say and experience in truth, what is said of the Canticles (2, 4): that the King has introduced him into the cellars of his delicious wine, and into the treasurehouse of his wisdom and spiritual gifts; for this virtue is a storehouse of most beautiful and fragrant virtues for the delight of the Almighty.

597. Although of course I wish thee to labor much in acquiring all virtues pertaining to temperance, I desire nevertheless that thou consider especially the beauty and fragrance of chastity, the strength which abstinence and sobriety in eating and drinking will give, the sweet influence of modesty in words and actions, the exalted nobility of poverty in the use of created things. With the help of these virtues, thou wilt attain the divine enlightenment, the peace and tranquillity of thy soul, the serenity of thy faculties, the right government of thy inclinations;

thou wilt be entirely illumined with the splendors of the divine graces and gifts; from an animal and sensual way of living thou wilt be raised to a heavenly intercourse and an angelic life; and that is what I seek in thee and what thou thyself by divine assistance art striving after. Be careful therefore, my dearest, and watch for the divine light in all thy actions, and let not any of thy powers be induced to activity merely by pleasure and inclination; but always act according to reason and for the glory of the Most High in all things necessary for the conduct of thy life; in eating, in sleeping, in dressing, in speaking, in hearing, in desiring, in correcting, in commanding, in speaking: let all be governed in thee by the light and the pleasure of the Lord God, and not by thy own.

598. And in order that thou mayest so much the more be captivated by the beauty and loveliness of the virtue of temperance, consider the vileness of its contrary vices and let thyself be deeply impressed according to the divine light given thee; consider assiduously how ugly, abominable, horrible and monstrous the world is in the sight of God and the saints on account of the enormous abominations, which men commit against this lovable virtue. Look how some follow like brutes after the horrors of sensuality, how gluttony degrades others, how some follow after pleasures of play and vanity, how others are dominated by pride and presumption, how many are entangled in avarice and the desire of gain, how they all follow the impulse of passions, seeking in this life only pleasure, while in the life to come they pile up for themselves eternal torments and incur the loss of the beatific vision of their God and Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST AND HOW THE MOST HOLY MARY MADE USE OF THEM.

599. The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to the light given to me on this subject, seem to me to add something to the virtues to which they refer; and because they superadd to them, they must also differ from them, although they pursue the same object. Every benefit conferred by the Lord can be called a gift flowing from his hand, although it may only be a natural benefit; but here we do not speak of the gifts of God included in this wide sense of the word, not even of the infused virtues and gifts; for not all persons, who possess one or more virtues, have the gifts pertaining to those virtues, or at least they do not reach that degree of virtue that they can be called perfect gifts, such as those mentioned by Isaias and referred to by the doctors of the Church. Isaias says the Holy Ghost rested upon Christ our Lord (Is. 11, 2), enumerating seven graces, which commonly are called gifts of the Holy Ghost, namely: the spirit of wisdom and intellect, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of science and piety, and the fear of God. These gifts were in the most holy soul of Christ, overflowing from the Divinity to which it was hypostatically united, just as the water is in the fountain, flowing from it and communicating itself to other places. For we all partake of the waters of the Savior (Is. 12, 3), grace for grace, gift for gift (John 1, 16); and in Him are hidden the treasures of divine wisdom and science (Coloss. 2, 1).

600. The gifts of the Holy Ghost correspond to the virtues to which they are related. And although not all teachers agree in their doctrines about their correspondence, there can be no difference of opinion in regard to the end or purpose of these gifts, which is none else than to give a special kind of perfection to the faculties for the performance of exalted and heroic acts of virtue. The excellence of these gifts must principally include and consist of some specially strong inspiration or influence of the Holy Ghost, which overcomes with greater efficacy the impediments and moves the free will with greater force, so that man be not remiss in his actions, but may proceed with great fortitude and with all perfection in those things to which that particular gift pertains. All this the free will cannot attain without being illumined and sustained by a specially efficacious and powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, which impels him, sweetly and pleasingly (Sap. Wisdom 8, 1) to follow the enlightenment, and freely to execute and accomplish what the will under the efficacious influence of the Holy Ghost, undertakes (Rom. 8). Therefore this impulse is called instinct of the Holy Ghost; for although the will acts freely and without compulsion, yet in these operations it is much like a voluntary instrument and seems to be one, because it acts less under the guidance of common prudence, as in other virtues, although it does not act with less intelligence or liberty.

601. I will try to make myself understood to a certain degree by referring to two different faculties of the will that are called into action in drawing the will to pursue virtue. The one is its own inclination or attraction toward the good, moving or stirring it in the same way as gravity causes the stone to fall or lightness makes the fire ascend toward its centre. This inclination of the will

is increased more or less by the custom or habits of virtue (and the same is to be said in their degree about the habits of vice), for being drawn by love, the will moves freely and of its own accord. The other faculty is that of the intellect, which is an enlightenment in regard to virtue by which the will directs itself in determining its course of action, and this enlightenment is proportionate with the habits and the operations of the will. For the ordinary acts, prudence and whatever deliberation it inspires, are sufficient; but for the more exalted operations it requires a higher and a superior enlightenment and incitement, that of the Holy Ghost, such as is given by the seven gifts. Since charity and grace is a supernatural habit, which depends on the divine Will in the same way as the ray depends upon the sun, therefore charity is accompanied by a particular influence of the Divinity, by which it is moved to pursue the rest of the virtues and good habits of the will, and much more so, when this charity is re-enforced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

602. Therefore it seems to me that I perceive in the gifts of the Holy Ghost a certain special enlightenment in which the intellect remains to a large extent merely passive as far as moving the will is concerned. In the will at the same time there is a certain perfection of its habits, which inclines it to most heroic acts in a manner far above the ordinary forces of virtuousness. As the movements of a stone, if another impulse beside gravity is added, are much accelerated, so the impulse of the will toward virtue is stronger and more excellent, if it is acted upon by the gifts. The gift of wisdom communicates to the soul a certain kind of taste by which it can distinguish the divine from the human without error, throwing all its influence and weight in all things against those inclinations which arise from human ignorance and folly;

this gift is related to charity. The gift of intellect serves to penetrate into the understanding of divine things and gives a knowledge of them overwhelmingly superior to the ignorance and slowness of the natural intellect; while that of science searches the most obscure mysteries and creates perfect teachers to oppose human ignorance; these two gifts are related to faith. The gift of counsel guides, directs and restrains man within the rules of prudence in his inconsiderate activity. It is closely related to this its own virtue. That of fortitude expels disorderly fear and gives strength to human weakness; it is superadded to the cardinal virtue of that name. Piety makes the heart kind, takes away its hardness and softens it against its own impiety and stubborness; it is related to religion. The fear of God lovingly humiliates the soul in opposition to pride, and is allied to humility.

603. In the most holy Mary were all the gifts of the Holy Ghost as in one who was undoubtedly capable of and entitled to them; for She was the Mother of the divine Word, from whom the Holy Ghost, the Giver of them, proceeds. Moreover, since these gifts were to correspond to her dignity of Mother of God, it follows, that they were in Her in a measure proportionate to that dignity, and as different from that of all the rest of the creatures as her position of Mother of God excels that of ordinary creatures. This was necessary also because She enjoyed at the same time impeccability, while the other creatures stand in such a distant relation to the Holy Spirit, not only on account of their common sin, but on account of their place in creation, having no such proximity to the Holy Ghost. If these gifts existed in Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, as in their fountainhead, they were in Mary as in a lake or ocean, from whence they are distributed over all creation: for

from her superabundance they overflow into the whole Church. This is referred to by Solomon in the book of Proverbs, when Wisdom is made to say: that She builds for Herself a house on seven pillars, etc., and in it She prepares the table, mixes the wine, and invites the little ones and the uninstructed ones drawing and raising them up from their childhood to teach them prudence (Prov. 9, 1, 2). I will not stop to expatiate on this, but every Catholic knows, that most holy Mary was this magnificent mansion of the Most High, built up in strength and beauty on these seven pillars of the gifts, so that in this mystic palace might be held the banquet of the whole Church. In Mary was prepared the table, at which all we uninstructed little ones, children of Adam, may become satiated with the activities and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

604. When speaking of these gifts as acquired by the discipline in the exercise of virtue and the conquest of the contrary vices, the first place must be assigned to fear of God. In regard to Christ, Isaias begins by mentioning the gift of wisdom, the highest one, because Christ received them as the Master and as the Head, and not as a disciple. In the same order we are to consider them in the most holy Mary, for in gifts She was made more similar to her most holy Son, than other creatures. The gift of wisdom confers a certain enlightenment, like a second taste, by which the intellect as it were tastes the hidden truth and searches into the highest and ultimate causes of things, while the will, with this same taste of truth in the highest good, distinguishes the real good from the apparent good without fail. For he is truly wise, who perceives without mistake the true good in order to taste of it, and who tastes it in perceiving it. This taste of wisdom consists in rejoicing in the highest good by an intimate union of love, upon which follows the savouring

and relishing of the particular good gained and realized by the exercise of the virtues inferior to love. Therefore he is not called wise, who merely perceives truth in a speculative manner, although he may find his delight in that pursuit: nor is he called wise, who practices virtue merely for the sake of obtaining a knowledge of it, and still less he who practices it for other reasons. But he, that perceives the highest and the true good, and in it and for it also the minor truths, and who, on account of the relish of this truth, acts with a sincere and unitive love of that good, is the one who will be truly wise. This perception or knowledge is supplied to wisdom by the gift of intellect, which precedes and accompanies it, and which consists in an intimate penetration into the divine truths, and in the perception of all that can be reduced and pave the way toward them; for the Spirit searches the profound things of God, as the Apostle says (I Cor. 2, 10).

605. This same spirit will be necessary in order to understand and in order to explain to a certain extent the gifts of wisdom and intellect possessed by Mary, the Empress of heaven. The impetus of the river, which was withheld by the highest Goodness for so many eternal ages, rejoiced this City of God by its flow, and through inhabitation of the Onlybegotten of the Father and Herself, completely filled her most holy soul; so that it seemed, (according to our way of speaking), as if the infinite oceans of the Divinity were drained into this sea of wisdom as soon as She was capable of invoking the Spirit of wisdom. And in order that She might invoke Him, He came to Her, that She might learn wisdom without guile and communicate it without envy (Wisdom 7, 13). This She also did; for by means of her wisdom, the light of the world, the eternal incarnate Word manifested Itself to the world. This most wise Virgin knew

in her wisdom the arrangement of the whole world and the powers of the elements (Wisdom 7, 17), the beginning, the middle, and the end of time with its mutations, the course of the stars, the natures of the animals, the fury of the wild beasts, the powers of the winds, the dispositions and thoughts of men, the virtues of plants, herbs, trees, fruits and roots, the hidden and occult things beyond all thoughts of men, the mysterious ways of the Most High: all this Mary, our Queen, knew and She delighted in it through the wisdom, which She drew from its original fountain and which was embodied in all her thoughts.

606. Thence did She receive that vapor of the power of God and the bright emanation of his pure charity, which made Her immaculate and preserved Her from the pollution, which stains the soul; and on this account She remained a mirror without blur reflecting the Majesty of God. Thence did She draw the spirit of intelligence, belonging to wisdom, a spirit holy, single, manifold, subtle, eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving the good without impediment, beneficent, gentle, kind, steadfast, assured, secure, having all power, overseeing all things and understanding all things with clearness and with a subtlety reaching from one end to the other (Wisdom 7, 22). All these qualities, which the wise man mentions as belonging to the Spirit of Wisdom, were in a singularly perfect manner the property of Mary most holy, secondary only to the manner in which they were possessed by her Onlybegotten. Together with wisdom came to Her all good (Wisdom 7, 11) and in all her works She was led on by these high gifts of wisdom and intellect. By them She was governed in the exercise of all the rest of her virtues, being as it were saturated with this incomparable wisdom.

607. Something has already been said of Her other gifts, when speaking of the gifts in general; but since all that we can understand and say is so far beneath that which is really to be found in this mystical city of Mary, there always remains much to add. The gift of counsel, in the order given by Isaias, follows that of the intellect; it consists in a supernatural illumination, by which the Holy Ghost touches the interior, enlightening it beyond all human and ordinary intelligence and thereby inclining the soul to choose all that is most profitable, most decent and just, and to reject all that is of the contrary kind. It leads back the will by the immaculate and eternal laws of God to the standard of one single love, conforming it to perfect desire of the highest Good. Thus divinely instructed, the creature lays aside the multitude of the diverse inclinations, and the foreign and the inferior affections and movements that may retard or hinder the human heart from listening to or following the divine impulses and counsels, or that may prevent man from conforming to the living example of Christ our Lord, who in highest council has said to the eternal Father: "Not my will be done, but thine" (Matth. 26, 39).

608. The gift of fortitude is the participation of influence of a divine virtue, which the Holy Ghost communicates to the created will, in order that it may be happily encouraged to raise itself above all that is passing and all that is wont to inspire human weakness with fear in temptations, sorrows, tribulations and adversities. Overcoming and vanquishing them all, the will acquires and maintains in itself all that is most arduous and excellent in virtue; it transcends and surpasses all the virtues, graces, spiritual and interior exaltations, revelations, sensible ecstasies of love; no matter of what degree and excellence, it leaves all behind and soars upward in divine

flight, until it reaches the highest and the most intimate union with the supreme Good after which it longed with the most ardent desire. Then in truth flows the sweetness from strength (Judges 14, 14), having conquered all things in Him that strengthened it (Philip. 4, 13). The gift of science is an intelligent and unerring knowledge of what must be believed and done in regard to the virtues, and it differs from counsel, in so far as science selects, while counsel decides; science forms a correct judgment and counsel makes the wise choice. Science differs also from intelligence, because intelligence penetrates into the divine truths of faith and virtues by means of a simple intuition, while science knows authoritatively all that can be deduced from the principles of faith, conforming the outward operations of the faculties to the perfection of the virtues and being as it were the mother and the root of discretion.

609. The gift of piety is a divine virtue or influence by which the Holy Ghost softens, or as it were smoothens or melts the human will, moving it to embrace all that pertains to the service of the Most High and to the welfare of the neighbor. By means of this softening and sweet mildness of the mind, our will is ever ready, and our memory always attentive, so that in all times and places and circumstances we are ready to praise, bless, thank and honor the highest Good; and likewise we are moved to act with a tender and loving compassion toward creatures, without failing them in their troubles and necessities. This gift is not hindered, when it meets envy and it overlooks hate, avarice, and spurns weakness, or littleness of mind; for it causes in man a strong and delightful inclination by which it proceeds sweetly and lovingly to fulfill all the works of the love of God and the neighbor, making him benevolent, ready to do a service, kind and diligent. On

that account the Apostle says, that the exercise of piety is useful for all things (I Tim. 4, 8) and that it has the promise of eternal life, being a most noble instrument of charity.

610. In the last place comes the gift of fear, so highly praised, exalted and recommended in many places of the holy Scriptures and by the holy teachers, as the foundation of Christian perfection and as the beginning of true wisdom; for the fear of God before all other things resists, banishes and destroys the arrogant foolishness of men. This important gift consists in a loving heedfulness and a most noble modesty and restraint, by which the soul withdraws within itself making it conscious of its own lowly condition, comparing its lowliness with the supreme majesty and greatness of God, not attending merely to its own sentiments, preventing it to be wise in its own conceit, and thus filling it with awe, as the Apostle teaches (Rom. 11, 21). This gift of fear has its different degrees; in the beginning it is called initial, and afterwards it becomes filial fear; for first the soul commences to flee from guilt, as contrary to the highest Good; and then it proceeds still farther in its selfabasement and selfcontempt, comparing its own littleness with God's majesty, its ignorance with his wisdom, its poverty with his infinite riches. Thus, finding itself in all things dependent on God's divine will, it humiliates and subjects itself beneath all creatures for the sake of God, acting toward Him and towards them with a sincere love. It finally reaches the perfection of the sons of God and arrives at the intimate union of its powers with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

611. If I should dilate still more in the explanation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, I would far exceed the limits which I have set, and I would have to extend dispropor-

tionately this discourse: that which I have said of these gifts seems to me sufficient for the understanding of their nature and their qualities. This understanding will enable us properly to consider, how these gifts of the Holy Ghost were possessed by the sovereign Queen of heaven not only in an ordinarily sufficient degree, such as is commonly possessed by other saints; but that they were in this Lady in such an excellent and privileged a degree, as would not fall to the lot of the saints, nor be proper to anyone inferior to Her in sanctity. Having then understood, in what holy fear, piety, fortitude, science and counsel consist and in how far they are gifts of the Holy Ghost, let the human estimation and angelic understanding dilate, let them soar in thought to the noblest, the most excellent, the most perfect and the most divine: greater than all this, and above whatever else creatures in their entirety can conceive, will be the gifts of Mary, and the lowest of the perfections of Mary will scarcely be within reach of the highest that can enter the thoughts of man; just as in the same manner the highest perfections of our Lady and Queen attain only in a certain sense the lowest of Christ and the Divinity.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY MARY THE MOST HOLY QUEEN.

612. My daughter, these most noble and excellent gifts of the Holy Ghost, which thou hast come to understand, are the emanations of the Divinity communicating themselves to and transforming the holy souls: on their own part they do not admit of any limitation but only on the part of the subject upon which they act. If the creatures would empty their hearts of earthly love and affections, although their heart is limited, they would participate without measure in the torrent of the infinite Godhead

through the inestimable gifts of the Holy Ghost. The virtues purify the creature from the ugliness and guilt of its vices, and thereby they begin to restore the disconcerted order of its faculties, which was first lost by original sin and afterwards increased by actual sins; they add beauty to the soul, strength and joy in doing good. But the gifts of the Holy Ghost raise these same virtues to a sublime perfection, adornment and beauty, by which they dispose, beautify and fill the soul with graces and introduce it to the chamber of its Spouse, where it remains united with the Divinity in a spiritual bond of eternal peace. From this most blessed condition it proceeds faithfully and truthfully to the practice of heroic virtues; and laden with them it returns to the same source from which it issued forth, namely God himself. In his shadow it rests and is satiated, freed from the impetuous fury of the passions and their disorderly appetites. Such a happiness however is the lot of few, and only by experience can it actually be known, who does attain it.

613. Take heed therefore, my dearest, and study profoundly how thou canst ascend to the height of these gifts; for it is the will of the Lord and mine, that thou ascend higher up as a guest in the feast (Luc. 14, 10) which is prepared for thee in all the sweetness of his blessed gifts (Ps. 20, 4) and to which thou hast been invited for this very purpose by this excess of liberality. Remember that there are only two ways to eternity: the one, which leads to eternal death by contempt of virtue and ignorance of the Divinity; the other, which leads to eternal life by the profitable knowledge of the Most High; for this is eternal life (Jno. 17, 3), that men know the way to Him and to his Onlybegotten, whom He sent into the world. The way of death is trodden by innumerable wicked ones (Eccles. 1, 14), who are unaware of their

own ignorance, presumption and insipid pride. To those, whom his mercy calls to his admirable light (1 Pet. 2, 9), and whom He engenders anew as sons of light, God gives by this regeneration a new being in faith, hope and charity, making them his own and heirs of an eternal and godlike fruition. Having been made sons they are endowed with the virtues accompanying the first justification, in order that as sons of light, they may perform corresponding works of light; and over and above they receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And just as the material sun denies its light and warmth to nothing that is capable and fit for its influence, so also the divine Wisdom, emitting its voice on the high mountains, on the royal highway and in the most hidden paths, invites and calls out to all, and hides itself or denies itself to no one (Prov. 8,1). But the foolishness of men makes them stupid and deaf, their impious malice makes them scoffers, and their unbelieving perversity turns them away from God, whose Wisdom finds no place in the malevolent heart (Wisdom 1, 4), nor in a body subject to sin.

614. Thou however, my daughter, remember thy promises, thy vocation and thy aspirations; for the tongue which lies to God, is an abominable murderer of the soul (Wisdom 1, 11, 12) : see that thou do not pursue death in the error of this life, nor draw upon thyself ruin by the work of thy hands (Cant. 2, 4), as by divine light, thou hast seen the sons of darkness do. Fear the powerful God and Lord with an humble and a well-ordered fear, and in all thy works be governed by that Master. Make thy heart gentle, yielding and docile to discipline and works of piety. Judge of things according to the true value of virtue and vice. Animate thyself with an invincible fortitude to strive after the most arduous and exalted, and to endure the most adverse and exacting labors.

By discretion choose the means for attaining to these results. Give way to the force of the divine light, by which thou canst transcend all sensible things, rise to the highest knowledge of the hidden secrets of divine wisdom and distinguish between the things of the new and of the old man. Then wilt thou be made capable of partaking of this wisdom; for then thou wilt enter into the wine-cellar of thy Spouse and be inebriated with his love, and his eternal charity will be well ordered in thee.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DIVINE VISIONS ENJOYED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND THE EFFECTS WHICH THEY WROUGHT IN HER.

615. The grace of divine visions, revelations and raptures, (I do not speak here of the beatific visions), although they are operations of the Holy Ghost, must be distinguished from justifying grace and from virtues, which sanctify and perfect the soul in their operations. As not all the just, nor all the saints, necessarily have visions or divine revelations, it is evident that sanctity and virtuousness can exist without these gifts. It is also evident, that revelations and visions are not dependent upon the sanctity and perfection of those, that are thus favored, but upon the divine will. God concedes them according to weight and measure for the ends which He wishes to attain in his Church (Wisdom 11, 21). God can without doubt grant great and the most exalted visions to those, who are less holy, and only inferior revelations to those, who are of exalted sanctity. The gift of prophecy and the other gifts freely given (gratis data) He can give to those even, who are not saints; some of the raptures moreover can arise from causes, which have nothing to do with moral virtues. Therefore if any comparison is made between the Prophets, their sanctity does not enter into calculation, for that can be estimated only by God; but the divine light of prophecy and the mode of receiving it, must be made the basis of the comparison as to its being more or less exalted in its

different aspects. Thus it happens, that charity and virtue, which make their possessors holy and perfect, depend upon the will, while visions and revelations, and likewise some of the raptures, affect the understanding of the intellectual part of man, the perfection of which does not in itself sanctify the soul.

616. Nevertheless, though the gift of divine vision is distinct from holiness and separate from it, the divine will and providence very often joins them according to the end and object in the gratuitous gifts of special revelation; for sometimes God ordains them for the public benefit (I Cor. 12, 7) and for the common good of the Church, as the Apostle tells us. Thus the Prophets, inspired by the Holy Ghost and not filled with their own imaginations (II Pet. 1, 21), spoke and prophesied to us the mysteries of the Redemption and of the evangelical Law (I Pet. 1, 10). When the revelations and visions are of this kind, they are not necessarily joined with sanctity; for Balaam was a prophet and no saint. But generally it suited divine Providence, that the prophets should at the same time be saints, preferring not to deposit, at least not easily and frequently, the spirit of prophecy and of divine revelations in impure vessels. In some instances He, as the Allpowerful, did choose to act in this manner, yet (not to mention many other reasons) He did not ordinarily wish to derogate from the power of his divine truths and teachings by the bad life of the instrument.

617. At other times the divine revelations and visions do not pertain to things of so general an import and they do not concern so much the common good, but only the particular advantage of the one who receives them; just as the former are the effects of God's love toward his Church, so the latter, the special revelations, are the re-

sults of the special love of God toward the particular soul. He communicates them in order to instruct his chosen ones and in order to raise them to the highest grade of love and perfection. In this kind of revelations the spirit of wisdom transcends through successive generations of holy souls, making them successively prophets and friends of God. Just as the efficient cause of the revelations is the love of God shown to some particular souls, so also their final cause or object is the holiness, the purity and the charity of these very souls; God chooses this means of divine revelation and vision in order to gain this end.

618. I do not therefore say here, that revelations and visions are the indispensable and necessary means for the making of the saints and the perfect; many are such by other means, irrespective of these benefits. But, even supposing this truth, that the concession or denial of these particular gifts depends solely upon the divine will, it is nevertheless also a fact that on our part and on the part of God there may be certain reasons of propriety which induce God to communicate them more frequently to his servants. The first among several is, that the most proper and convenient means of rising to eternal things, entering into them, becoming spiritualized, and arriving at the perfect union of the soul with the highest Good, is the supernatural light concerning the mysteries and secrets of the Most High, which comes from revelation and vision granted to it in solitude and in its excesses of mind. For this purpose the Lord himself invites the soul with many promises and caresses, as is ofttimes shown in holy Scripture and especially in the Canticles of Solomon.

619. The second of these reasons of propriety concerns the Lord: for love is impatient to communicate its favors and its mysteries to the beloved and to the friend. "I

will not now call you servants, nor treat you as servants," our Lord, the Master of truth said to the Apostles, "for I have manifested to you the secrets of my Father," (John 15, 15). And Moses says of himself, that God spoke to him as a friend with a friend (Exodus 23, 11). The holy Ancestors, Patriarchs and Prophets, received from the Holy Ghost not only general revelations, but many other private and particular ones, and these were tokens of the love in which God held them, as is seen from the petition of Moses to allow him to see the face of God. (Exod. 23, 13). The same is shown by the names, which the Almighty applies to the chosen soul in calling it spouse, friend, dove, sister, perfect, beloved, beautiful, etc. (Cant. 4, 8, 9; 2, 10; 1, 14 et passim). All these titles, though betokening much of the force of divine love and its effects, yet fall far short of that which the supreme King operates in those whom He wishes thus to honor; for the Lord is mighty to do all that He desires; and He alone knows how to desire as a Spouse, as a Friend, as a Father, as the highest and infinite Good, without limit or measure.

620. The truth loses nothing of its force by its not being intelligible to carnal wisdom: nor by the deceptions of carnal prudence, through which some souls have been led into false visions and revelations forged by the devil in the garb of light. This deception has been more frequent in women on account of their ignorance and their passions; however, it fell also upon many men, who sought to appear virtuous and wise. In all of them it has arisen from an evil root. I do not speak of those who with diabolical hypocrisy have feigned false and apparent revelations, visions and raptures; but I speak of those who have been deceived by lying visions through the agency of the devil, although such things do not

happen without sin in consenting thereto. Of the former it can be said, that they deceive, and of the latter, at least in the beginning, that they are deceived; for the ancient serpent, knowing them to be little mortified in their passions and little practiced in the interior perception of the divine things, implants into them with astute subtlety a proud presumption, that they are much favored by God. The devil robs them of their humble fear and inspires them with vain curiosity to know high things by revelation, to be favored with visions, and to be distinguished in such things above other men. Thereby they open the gates for the entrance of satan, he fills them with deceitful and false illusions, far distant from divine truth, yet having the appearance of truth in order to conceal his poison and deceive the soul.

621. The way to avoid such dangerous deceit is to live in humble fear and not to aspire to high things (Rom. 11, 20); not to judge of our advance in the tribunal of our inclinations and not to trust to our own prudence; to leave judgment to God, his ministers, and well informed confessors, who will search into the intention of our acts. Then it will soon become known, whether the soul desires these favors as a means of virtue and perfection or in order to obtain honor among men. The most secure path will always be not to desire them, and always to fear the danger which at all times is great and more so in the first beginnings. For the sensible sweetness of devotion, even when it comes from the Lord and when it is not an imposture of the devil, is not given because the soul is already capable of the solid food of his greater favors and secrets; but it is given as the food of the little ones, in order to draw them away with greater earnestness from the faults and induce them to greater self-denial in sensible things; not at all in

order to make them imagine that they are advanced in virtue. Even raptures, which spring from admiration, suppose ignorance rather than special love. As soon as our love becomes ecstatic, fervent, yearning, quickened, full of activity and inaccessible, impatient of any other presence except that of its Beloved, and if besides all this, it has a full command over all the affections of the heart; then the soul begins to be rightly disposed to receive the light of mysterious revelations and of divine visions; and so much the better will it be disposed toward receiving them, the more it esteems itself unworthy of the reception of even much smaller favors. Wise men will not be surprised that women have been so much favored in these gifts; for besides being more fervent in their love, God also favors them for being the weakest among creatures and so much the more appropriate witnesses of his power. Women also are more wanting in the acquired science of theology than learned men, except when the Most High infuses that science in order to illumine their weak and uninformed judgment.

622. Having established these principles, we must acknowledge that in most holy Mary, even if there were no other special reasons, the revelations and visions of the Most High were more exalted, more wonderful, more frequent, and more divine than those of all the rest of saints. These favors, just like all the gifts, must be measured by her dignity, her holiness, purity, and also by the love, which her Son and the blessed Trinity cherished towards Her, who was the Mother of the Son, the Daughter of the Father, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. In proportion to the greatness of these prerogatives were also the influxes of the Divinity: Christ and his Mother being infinitely more beloved than all the rest of the angels and men. The divine visions enjoyed by our

sovereign Queen can be divided into five grades or kinds, and I will describe each one of them, as far as has been revealed to me.

MOST HOLY MARY'S CLEAR VISION OF THE DIVINITY.

623. The highest and most excellent of all her visions were those of the beatific vision of the divine Essence, for in her state of pilgrimage She many times enjoyed the unveiled vision of the Divinity. I shall mention all these visions in the course of this history according to the time and occasion in which She enjoyed this supreme privilege of a creature. Some doctors are in doubt, whether the other saints have reached this state of seeing the Godhead clearly and intuitively while yet in mortal flesh; but whatever may be their uncertainty about such visions in regard to other saints, no such doubt can be entertained in regard to the Queen of heaven, and it would be an injury to Her, if we were to measure her favors with the common measure of the saints. Many more favors and graces than were even possible in them actually were consummated in the Mother of grace, and it is at least possible that beatific vision can take place in men yet in their pilgrimage, whatever may be the mode in which this happens. The first requisite of a soul, which is to see God face to face, is a degree of sanctifying grace most exalted and far above the ordinary. Now the degree of sanctifying grace, which Mary reached from the first moment of her existence, was superabundant and of such perfection, that it exceeded that of the highest seraphim. In addition to sanctifying grace, there must be great purity of all the faculties, without a shadow of guilt or the least inclination to sin. Just as a vessel, which has contained any impure liquid and which is to be filled with another pure substance, must be cleansed, washed and purified until not

a taste or odor of the former remains so as not to infect the new substance: so all traces of sin (and much more of actual sin) contaminate and infect the soul. And because all these effects make the soul unfit for divine bounty, it must be prepared before it can be united with God by the intuitive vision and beautifying love. It must be cleansed and purified, so that not a vestige of the odor, or the taste of sin remains, nor any traces of vicious habits or inclinations consequent thereon. This applies not only to the effects and stains of mortal, but also of venial sin, all of which cause in the soul a special turpitude, like to that, which, according to our way of understanding such things, ensues, when a foul breath covers and obscures the clearness of crystal: all its brightness and purity must first be restored to the soul before it can see God face to face.

624. Moreover, besides this purity which is as it were the negative cleansing of the nature of him who is to enjoy the vision of God, it is necessary to cauterize the infection of original sin, so that it is entirely extinct and neutralized, as if it had never existed in the creature. Thus all trace or inward cause inclining it to any sin or imperfection must first be done away with, and the entire free will must, as it were, be made incapable of everything, which in any way is opposed to highest sanctity and goodness. Hence, on account of what I shall mention afterward, it will be easily understood, how difficult it is for the soul to attain the necessary condition for the clear vision of God in mortal flesh; and that it can be conceded to the creatures only with great circumspection, for most important reasons, and after great preparation. According to my understanding there are two kind of incongruities and divergencies of the sinful creature in regard to the divine nature. The first consists in this, that God is invisible, infinite, a pure and simple act, while man is

a corporeal, earthly, corruptible and coarse substance. The other incongruity is caused by sin, which is immensely distant from the divine goodness, and this entails a greater divergence and alienation than the first. But both of them must be done away with before such extremes can be united, and before the creatures can rest in this supreme manner in the Deity and before it can assimilate itself with God so as to see and enjoy Him as He is (I John 3, 2).

625. All the requisites of immaculate purity and transparency, excluding all sin and imperfection, were possessed by the Queen of heaven in a much higher degree than even by the angels; for She was touched neither by original nor by actual sin, nor by any of their consequences. In this regard divine grace acted more powerfully in Her, than was merited by the impeccable nature of the angels, and in Mary there was no disproportion nor any obstacle of sin, which could retard the vision of God. On the other hand, besides being immaculate, the grace given to Her in the first instance exceeded that of the angels and saints, and Her merits were in proportion to that grace. By her first act She merited more than all the others, even by their most perfect and consummate acts, which they have performed in order to reach beatific vision. Therefore, if it is just, that in the other saints the reward of glory merited by them be deferred until the end of their mortal life: it does not seem against justice, that this law was not followed so strictly in regard to most holy Mary and that the most high Ruler should and really did proceed differently with Her during Her mortal existence. The most blessed Trinity would not suffer such a long delay in regard to Her, and manifested Itself to Her many times: since She merited it above all the angels, seraphim and saints, who, having

less grace and merits, are enjoying the supreme beatitude. Moreover, there was another reason why the Divinity should manifest Itself clearly to Her: namely, since She was elected to be the Mother of God, it was appropriate, that She should know by fruition and experience the treasure of the infinite Deity and see Him face to face as her God, whom having enjoyed, She was to clothe in mortal flesh and bear about in her virginal womb, and whom She was afterwards to treat as her Son and as her God.

626. Even with all the aforesaid purity and sinlessness and with the addition of sanctifying grace, the soul is not yet worthy or capable of the beatific vision, since still other dispositions and divine operations are required. With these the Queen of heaven was furnished whenever She enjoyed this vision and hence they are much more necessary to any other soul, that is to be thus favored in mortal flesh. After the soul has reached the state of purity and sanctification above described, the Lord adds a finishing touch as of a most spiritual fire, which refines and chases it as fire does the gold, or as Isaias was purified by the seraphim (Isaias 6, 7). It has two effects in the soul: first it spiritualizes and separates in it (according to our mode of understanding) the dross and earthliness connected with its present existence and its union with the bodily matter. Secondly it fills the soul with a new light, which scatters, I do not know what obscurity and darkness, just as the light of the morning scatters the darkness of night. This light takes possession, leaves the soul clarified and replenished with new splendors of a divine fire, producing still other effects in the soul. For if it is guilty or has been guilty of any sins, the soul deplores these sins with incomparable sorrow and contrition, with a sorrow, that cannot be equaled by any other human

sorrow, for all are very little in comparison with it. At the same time it feels another effect of this light: it purges the understanding of all the images impressed upon it by the sensible and visible things of earth. For all impressions and images, acquired by the senses distort the intellectual vision and serve only as a hindrance to the clear vision of the supreme spiritual essence of God. Therefore it is necessary to clear and evacuate from the faculties all these earthly idols and images. Not only is this necessary, in order that the soul may see God clearly and intuitively, but equally so, in order to see Him abstractively.

627. In the soul of our most pure Queen, there was no fault to deplore, no after-effects of the sensible operations, no dependence upon the body, and therefore these illuminations and purifications immediately wrought the other effects, beginning to elevate her nature to a condition not so far removed from the ultimate supreme End. In addition to this they caused in this most pure soul new sentiments and movements of humility and knowledge of the nothingness of the creature in comparison with the Creator and his blessings. Thus her inflamed heart was incited to many other heroic acts of virtue. Like effects are produced in a corresponding degree in other souls, who are to be prepared for the visions of the Deity.

628. Our curtailed insight might well hold that the foregoing preparations are sufficient for being admitted to the beatific vision; but they are not: still another quality is wanting, a divine emanation or light, the light of glory. This new cleansing, though it is similar in nature to those already spoken of, is altogether different from them in its effects. For it raises the soul to a very high and serene state, where, in greatest tranquillity, it enjoys the sweetest peace, which is not felt in connection with the

first mentioned purifications, For in those the pain and bitterness of sin is still felt, if the soul was guilty of any, and if not, then there remains still the earthly weight of our lower nature. These effects are not compatible with the close approach and assimilation to the supreme blessedness. It seems to me that the first purifications serve to mortify, and that, which I am now referring to, serves to revivify and heal nature. God proceeds in these things like the painter, who first delineates the image, then applies the ground colors, and at last puts on the finishing touches, so that the picture comes to light well defined.

629. Over and above all these purifications, preparations and their admirable effects, God adds still a last one, which is the light of glory by which the soul raises itself to attain and enjoy the beatific vision of God. In this light the Godhead manifests Itself, for without this light God cannot be seen by any creature. Since the natural powers of the creature cannot attain to this light and these preparations, therefore it is impossible to see God by the natural faculties alone, for all this far exceeds the forces of nature.

630. With all this beauty and adornment the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Daughter of the Father, and the Mother of the Son, was furnished for Her entrance into the chamber of the Divinity in order to enjoy from time to time the beatific vision and intuitive fruition. And as these favors were given to Her according to the measure of her dignity and grace, therefore it is impossible to encompass the godlike proportions of her enlightenment by the reasoning powers, or the thoughts of a creature, and much less of an ignorant woman. Still less can the joys of her soul be estimated or calculated, when it was thus exalted above all that is most supreme in the highest seraphim and saints. If in regard to all the just, even

the lowest of those who enjoy God, it is infallibly true, that neither eye has seen, nor ears heard, nor mind conceived, what God has prepared for his elect (I Cor. 2, 9), what must be the enjoyment of the greater saints? And if the same Apostle who says this confesses that he cannot repeat, what he had heard (II Cor. 12, 4), what shall we, in our narrow limitation of powers, be able to say of the Saint of the saints, the Mother of Him, who is the glory of the saints? Next to the Soul of her most holy Son, who was man and true God, She was the one, who knew and saw the greatest mysteries and sacraments in those infinite and hidden immensities of the Divinity. To Her more than to all the blessed in their entirety were thrown open the infinite treasures, the expanding vastnesses of that inaccessible Being, unlimited by any beginning or end. She, as the City of God, was inundated by the ecstatic torrents of the supreme Being, overwhelming Her with the impetuous waves of wisdom and grace, spiritualizing and impregnating Her with the spirit of the Divinity.

ABSTRACTIVE VISIONS OF THE DIVINITY ENJOYED BY MOST HOLY MARY.

631. The second kind of divine visions enjoyed by the Queen of heaven was the abstractive, which is very different and much inferior to the intuitive; it was more frequent in Her, though not daily or continual. This kind of knowledge or vision is communicated by the Most High without unveiling Himself directly to the created mind, but through a certain veil or species, by means of which He becomes manifest. Because of this intervening medium between the faculty and its object, this kind of vision is very much inferior to the clear and intuitive vision. It does not involve the real presence, though it

presupposes it intellectually in an inferior way. Although the creature knows that it is nigh to the Divinity and discovers the attributes, perfections and mysteries, which as in a mirror of the will, God wishes to show and manifest, yet it does not feel and is not aware of his presence so as to enjoy Him with complete satiety.

632. Nevertheless this is a great, rare and, next to the clear vision, a more excellent favor than any other. Although it does not require the light of glory, but only the light appropriate to the species themselves, and not even the ultimate disposition and purification proper to the light of glory; yet all the other preparations antecedent to the intuitive vision, must go before it; for by them the soul enters into the antechambers of the house of the eternal God and Lord (Psalm 45, 5). The effects of this kind of vision are admirable, for besides the exalted state which it presupposes in the soul and which raises it above itself (Thren. 3, 28), it inebriates the soul (Psalm 35, 9) with an ineffable and an inexplicable delight and sweetness, inflaming it with divine love, transforming it and causing a forgetfulness of and an aversion toward all earthliness and toward itself, so that already the soul does not any more live in itself, but in Christ and Christ in it (Gal. 2, 20). Besides all this there remains after this vision in the soul a light, which, if not lost by negligence and carelessness, or by some sin, will always accompany it to the highest pinnacle of perfection, teaching it the most secure paths to eternity and resembling the perpetual fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6, 12) or the beaconlight of the citadel of God (Apoc. 22, 5).

633. These and other effects were caused in our sovereign Queen by abstractive vision and to such an eminent degree, that I cannot give an explanation of my concept in words. But some idea will be obtained, if we consider

the condition of that most pure soul, in which there was not the least hindrance, either of lukewarmness, nor of the least defect, no indolence or forgetfulness, no negligence or ignorance, nor the least inattention; but in which on the contrary was the fullness of grace and of ardent love, unfailing diligence, perpetual and unceasing praise of the Creator, the utmost solicitude and readiness to give Him glory, and a preparation which allowed the powerful hand of God to operate without opposition or hindrance whatever. She was favored with this kind of blessed vision in the first moment of her Conception, as I have already related before (Supra, No. 228, 236, 311, 382, 388; infra, 731, 739; Part II 6-101; Part II 537), and will relate afterwards many times in the course of her most holy life.

INTELLECTUAL VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE MOST HOLY MARY.

634. The third kind of divine visions and revelations enjoyed by the most holy Mary were the intellectual ones. Although abstractive visions or the visions of the Divinity may be called intellectual visions, yet for two reasons I have mentioned them especially and placed them in a higher order. First, because the object of the abstractive visions is altogether supreme among intellectual things, whereas the range of these more ordinary intellectual visions extends to many various objects, since they include the material and the spiritual things, and the entire field of intellectual truths and mysteries. The second reason is, because the abstractive visions of the divine Essence are brought about by the most exalted and supernaturally infused species or images of the being of God; whereas the common revelations and the intellectual visions take place in diverse ways; sometimes the intellectual images of the

objects revealed are all infused; at other times not necessarily all the subject-matter of the revelations is infused; because then the same species or images, which the imagination or phantasy already possesses are sufficient for the revelation. For the understanding, endowed with a new light and a supernatural power, can apprehend the mysteries of God from imaginary images, as happened with Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 40, 41), and with Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 1, 24). This kind of revelation was given to David; and next to the knowledge of the Essence of the Deity, it is the most noble and secure. For neither the demons nor the angels can infuse this supernatural light into the understanding, since they can only cause images and phantasies in the imagination.

635. This form of revelation was common among the holy Prophets of the old and the new Testaments; for the light of perfect prophecy which they possessed, terminated in the understanding of some hidden mystery; and without this intelligence, or intellectual light, they would not have been perfect prophets, nor would they have spoken prophetically. Therefore, they that do or say something prophetical, as for instance Caiphas and the soldiers refusing to divide the garment of Christ our Lord (John 11, 49; 19, 24), although they are urged to these things by divine impulse, are not prophets in the perfect sense; for they do not speak prophetically, that is with divine intelligence and light. It is even true that the holy Prophets, who are prophets in the real sense, and who call themselves seers on account of the interior light by which they see secret things, can perform some prophetic actions without knowing all the mysteries included therein, or even without knowing any of the mysteries; but in such cases they are not to be called prophets in the same sense, as when they prophesy with a supernatural understanding

of things. This kind of revelation is of many different grades, which cannot here be explained; and although the Lord can communicate it irrespective of charity, of grace and virtue; yet ordinarily it is accompanied by them, as in the Prophets, Apostles and the just, and this happens both when He manifests his secrets to them as friends, and also when the intellectual visions or revelations are given for the advantage and greater advancement of those who receive them, as I have said above (No. 616). Therefore these revelations demand a very excellent predisposition in those souls who are to be raised to them, and ordinarily God does not communicate them, except when the soul is in the state of quiet and peace, withdrawn from the earthly things and well ordered in its faculties for the workings of the divine light.

636. In the Queen of heaven these intelligences or revelations were vastly different from those which are proper to the Saints and Prophets; for her Highness enjoyed them continually, both in habit and in act, whenever She was not enjoying other more exalted visions of the Divinity. Moreover the clearness and the extent of this intellectual light and all its effects were incomparably greater in most holy Mary. For of the truths, mysteries and sacraments of the Most High, She knew more than all the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and more even than all the angels combined; and She understood more profoundly and clearly, more unerringly and securely all that She did know. By means of this intelligence She penetrated to the very being of God and to his attributes as manifested in the very smallest of his works and creatures. Not one of them existed in which She did not perceive the participation of the greatness of the Creator and his divine foresight and providence. Most holy Mary alone could in the fullest sense say of Herself that the

Lord had manifested to Her the uncertain and occult things of his wisdom (Psalm 50, 8) as recorded by the Prophet. It is impossible to describe the effects of this intelligence in the sovereign Lady; this whole history must serve in a manner to declare them. In other souls they are of wonderful advantage and efficacy, for they illumine in the highest manner the understanding, inflame the will with incredible ardor, they undeceive, disentangle, elevate and spiritualize the creature, and at the same time they seem to lighten and subtilize even the gross and emburdened earthly body in holy emulation with the soul. The Queen of heaven enjoyed in these visions also another privilege, of which, however, I will speak in the following chapter.

IMAGINARY VISION OF MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

637. In the fourth place must be mentioned the imaginary visions, which are produced by sensible visions, raised or set in motion in the imagination or phantasy. They represent the object in a material or sensitive manner, in the same way as are represented those things we see, hear, touch or taste. By means of this kind of vision the Most High manifested to the Prophets of the old Testament great mysteries and sacraments. Such happened especially with Ezechiel, Daniel and Jeremias, and under the influence of similar visions the evangelist saint John wrote the Apocalypse. Since these visions partake so much of the sensible and corporal element, they are much inferior to the ones spoken of under the preceding heading. On this same account the demon can reproduce them in appearance by exciting phantasms of the imagination; he does not, however, reproduce them in reality,

being the father of lies. Therefore it is necessary to beware of these kind of visions and to examine them in the light of the teachings of the saints; for if the demon perceives any cupidity toward them in the soul during prayer or devotions, and if God permits, he can easily work deception. Even some saints, though dreading the dangers of such visions, were nevertheless entangled in them by satan in his assumed light, as is related in their lives for our instruction and warning.

638. The one in whom these imaginary visions and revelations were without any danger and entirely secure and divine, was most holy Mary, whose interior light could not be obscured or invaded by the astuteness of the serpent. Our Queen was favored with many such visions, for of this kind were those which manifested to Her many of the actions of her most holy Son while absent, as we shall see in the sequence of her life (Part II, Chap. 23, 24, 25, Book V). She also perceived in imaginary visions many creatures and mysteries, whenever the Most High so dispensed it according to his will and providence. And since this and many benefits received by the sovereign Princess of heaven were ordained for most high ends, not only for the advancement of her own sanctity, purity and merits, but also for the advantage of the Church, of which this great Mother of grace was to be a Teacher and a Coöperatrix in Redemption, the effects of these visions and her understanding of them were admirable and they were invariably accompanied by incomparable proofs of the glory of God, and of new and increasing gifts and graces in the soul of most holy Mary. Of the effects of these visions in other creatures I will speak immediately below; for of these and the next kind of visions, the same can be said as far as their effects in other souls are concerned.

CORPOREAL VISIONS OF DIVINE ORIGIN ENJOYED BY MOST HOLY MARY.

639. The fifth and lowest order of visions and revelations are those which are perceived by the corporeal and exterior senses, and that is the reason why they are called corporeal, although they can be brought about in two different ways. The one kind are truly and properly called corporeal visions, when in a visible and quantitative body some supernatural being appears to the sight or touch, be it God, a saint, or the demon, or a soul and the like; such body being formed for that very purpose by the ministry and power of good or of bad angels from the ether or from the phantasms, which, though it is no true or natural body of the thing represented by it, yet is truly a quantitative body constructed from the ether in external dimensions. The other kind of corporeal visions are such in an improper sense, rather an illusion of the sense of sight; for they are only an image of the object, its coloring, etc., which an angel can make visible by an alteration of the intervening air. The one that sees it thinks that he looks upon a real body actually present, though there is no such body, but only an empty image, by which the senses are imperceptibly fascinated. This kind of illusory visions of the senses is not proper to the good angels nor to divine revelation, although they are possible to God and the angels; such might have been the voice which Samuel heard. But they are a favorite ruse of the demon, on account of their deceptiveness, especially in regard to the sight. Therefore, and because the Queen never had this kind of visions, I will speak only of the truly corporeal visions, such as She really enjoyed.

640. In the holy Scriptures are many instances of corporeal visions granted to the saints and Patriarchs. Adam

saw God represented in the form of an angel (Gen. 3, 8); Abraham saw three angels (Gen. 17, 1); Moses saw a bush, (Exod. 3, 2) and many times the Lord himself. Likewise others, who were sinners, have had corporeal or imaginary visions: as for instance Cain (Gen. 4, 9), Baltassar (Dan. 5, 5), who saw the hand on the wall: then imaginary images, as for instance Pharao (Gen. 41, 2) in the vision of the cows; Nabuchodonozor, that of the tree and the statue (Dan. 4, 12, 2, 1) and other recorded in the holy Scriptures. These instances prove that in order to see corporeal and imaginary visions sanctity is not required in the subject. But it is true nevertheless, that they who obtain such an imaginary or corporeal vision, without receiving therefrom any light or intelligence, cannot be called Prophets; nor can they be said to receive a true revelation, but only those who receive the necessary understanding of the vision, as Daniel says (Dan. 10, 1). Thus Joseph and Daniel were Prophets, not however Pharao, Baltassar, Nabuchodonosor. Moreover those are the more important revelation and visions, which are accompanied by a higher intelligence, although, to judge from outward appearances, others may be called higher, namely, those which represent God or the Mother of God, and the saints according to their station.

641. It is certain that in order to receive corporeal visions it is necessary that the senses should be prepared. The imaginary ones are often sent by God in sleep, as for instance in the vision of Joseph, the husband of most holy Mary (Matth. 1, 20), of the Magi Kings (2, 12) of Pharao (Gen. 41, 2), etc. Others can be perceived while the senses are in their full natural activity, this not being repugnant. But the ordinary and co-natural manner of receiving the corporeal as well as the intellectual visions, is during some rapture or ecstasy of the external senses;

for in such a state the interior faculties are more collected and prepared for the perception of high and divine things. Yet the exterior senses are apt to be a hindrance less to the intellectual visions than to the imaginary ones, the latter having more affinity for exterior things than the acts of the intellect. Therefore it often happens, whenever the intellectual revelations are not infused species, or when the affections do not suspend the action of the senses, that most high intelligences of great and supernatural mysteries are conferred without the cessation of the activity of the senses.

642. In the Queen of heaven this happened many times and even frequently. For, though She was enraptured during many of the beatific visions, (which in ordinary mortals is always required), and also during her intellectual and imaginary visions; yet, even while She was in the full use of her senses, She received higher revelations and intelligences than all the saints and Prophets in their greatest ecstasies. Nor in any wise did her exterior senses disturb her imaginary visions. For the great heart of Mary, so full of wisdom, was not embarrassed by the sentiments of admiration and love, which are wont to take away the sensible activities of the other saints and Prophets. This was true of her corporeal visions, as is evident from the Annunciation of the message by the archangel Gabriel (Luc. 1, 18), and although the Evangelists give no other instance in the course of her most holy life, prudent and Catholic judgment cannot doubt that they did happen at other times, for the Queen of the heavens and of the angels was to be served by her vassals, as we shall relate later on (No. 758) when we describe the continuous service of her angelic guard, and of other angels appearing in corporeal and visible form. It happened also in another way, as we shall see in the following chapter.

643. Other souls must be very circumspect and careful in regard to these corporeal visions, since they are subject to dangerous deceptions and illusions coming from the ancient serpent. Those who never seek them avoid a great part of this danger. If the soul is free from such desire and from other disorderly affections, and if then any corporeal or imaginary visions should happen, it must be very cautious before performing and executing that, which is enjoined by those visions: for it is a very bad sign and savoring of the devil's influence, if, without any deliberation or counsel, it immediately believes and obeys; since the good angels, who are our teachers in matters of obedience, truth, prudence and holiness, do not urge such a course of action. There are also other indications and signs, generally accompanying the causes and the effects of such visions, which will securely guide souls as to their truthfulness or their falsity. But I will not enter into these matters, in order not to be led away from my purpose; and besides, I submit myself in these things to the doctors and teachers of the spiritual life.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

644. My daughter, in the enlightenment, which thou hast received in this chapter, thou hast a certain rule of action in regard to the visions and revelations of the Lord, and it inculcates two precautions. The one consists in thy subjecting these relations to the examination and the judgment of thy confessors and superiors, asking the Most High with a lively faith, that He give them light to understand his divine will and truth to instruct thee fully therein. The other consists in questioning thy own heart and observing the effects of these revelations and visions, prudently trying to assure thyself against any error. For the divine influence, which accompanies them, will urge and draw thee on, inflaming thy heart to chaste love and

reverence of God to acknowledgment of thy littleness, to abhorrence of the earthly vanities, to desire of being despised by creatures, to joyful suffering, to love of the cross and an earnest and generous acceptation of it; it will move thee to seek the last place, to love those that persecute thee, to fear and abhor sin, even the slightest, to aspire to the purest, the most perfect and refined in virtue, to deny thyself thy own inclinations, and to unite thyself to the highest and truest good. When He thus teaches thee the most holy and perfect things of the Christian law and excites thee to imitate Him and me, then thou wilt have infallible signs of divine truth revealed to thee by the Most High in these visions.

645. And in order that thou, dearest, mayest execute this doctrine, which thou hast received through the kindness of the Most High, do not ever forget it, and do not lose sight of the blessing of having been instructed by Him in these things with so much loving caresses; renounce all human esteem and consolation, all the delight and pleasure of the world. All that thy earthly inclinations demand, refuse to thyself, although it may be small and licit in itself; turn thy back on all sensible things, seeking only to love and to suffer. This is the science and divine philosophy taught thee by the visits of the Most High and in it thou wilt feel the force of the divine fire, which should never through thy fault and thy negligence, be allowed to become extinguished in thy bosom. Be alert, dilate thy heart, gird thyself with fortitude in order to be commissioned with great undertakings and be able to accomplish them. Be constant in thy faith regarding these admonitions, believing in them, esteeming them and writing them in thy soul with an humble and loving affection of thy heart, as being sent in faithful solicitude by thy Spouse and transmitted to thee by me, thy Teacher and Mistress.

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CHAPTER XV.

DESCRIPTION OF ANOTHER KIND OF VISIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS, WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY ENJOYED WITH THE HOLY ANGELS OF HER GUARD.

646. Such is the force and efficacy of God's grace, and of his love excited in the creature, that it can blot out in it the very images of sin and the earthly nature of man, (I Cor. 15, 49) and form in it a new being and celestial image, whose conversation is in heaven (Philip 3, 20), understanding, loving and operating not any more as a creature of earth, but as a being celestial and divine; for, the force of love ravishes the heart and soul by which the creature lives, sacrificing and transforming them to that, which it loves. This Christian truth, believed by all, understood by the learned, and experienced by the saints, must be conceived as fulfilled in our great Queen and Lady in so privileged a manner, that neither by the example of what was experienced by the saints, nor by the intellect of the angels, can it ever be comprehended or explained. Most holy Mary as being the Mother of the Word, was Mistress of all creation; but being a faithful representation of her onlybegotten Son, She in imitation of Him made so little use of creatures, of which She was Mistress, that none ever used them less than She, for She excluded all that was not absolutely necessary for the service of the Most High and for the natural life of her most holy Son and of Herself.

647. To this forgetfulness and withdrawal from all

earthly things corresponded her intercourse with heaven; this again was proportionate to her dignity of Mother of God and Queen of heaven, all earthly intercourse being thus transformed into the heavenly. It followed as a natural consequence, that the Queen and Mistress of the angels enjoyed singular privileges in regard to the attention paid to Her by the heavenly courtiers, her vassals, and She treated and conferred with them in a more exalted manner, than all the other human creatures, how holy so ever they may be. In the twenty-third chapter of the first book I have said something of the diverse ordinary visions in which the holy angels and seraphim, who were destined and selected for her guard, manifested themselves to our Queen and Mistress. And in the foregoing chapter I explained in general the manner and form of the divine visions conceded to Her, having been careful to keep in mind that in all their wide range and sphere they were supremely exalted and divine in their nature, their manner, and their effects upon her most holy soul.

648. In this chapter I will treat of another kind of vision, more singular and privileged still, which the Most High granted to most holy Mary and by which She communicated with and visibly treated with the holy angels of her guard and with the rest, who, in behalf of the Lord, visited Her on diverse occasions. This mode of vision and intercourse was of the same kind as that by which each one of the supernal spirits knows the others as they are in themselves, without any other image to move the intellect than the very substance and nature of the angel thus known. The superior angels illumine the inferior, making known to them the hidden mysteries which the Most High reveals and manifests immediately to the higher angels for transmission to the lowest; for this manner of communicating with them is befitting to the greatness and

infinite majesty of the highest King and Governor of all creation. From this it can easily be seen, that this most orderly illumination and revelation is a favor which is superadded to the essential glory of the holy angels. For the essential glory they obtain immediately from the Divinity, each one receiving the vision and fruition of God according to the measure of his merits. One angel cannot create essential happiness in another by illuminating him or revealing to him a mystery; for the one who is illuminated would not thereby see God face to face, without which he cannot be in beatitude or attain to his last end.

649. But since the Object is infinite and is like a voluntary mirror, there are infinite secrets and mysteries, (besides those which pertain to beatific knowledge), which God can reveal to the saints and which He reveals to them especially in the government of his Church in the world; in these revelations He follows the course, which I am explaining. As these revelations are outside of the essential glory, the want of these revelations cannot be called ignorance in the angels or a privation of knowledge; but it is called nescience or negation; while revelation is called illumination, or a purgation or purification of that nescience. According to our mode of understanding it might be compared to the process which takes place, when the rays of the sun pass through many crystals in succession, making all partake of the same light from the first to the last, and reaching first those that are more immediately neighboring to the light. Only one difference must be noted in this comparison; that the prisms or crystals are entirely passive in this process in respect to the rays, without having any more activity than that given by the sun, which illumines all by one operation; but the holy angels are passive in receiving the enlightenment and

active in communicating it to their inferiors; and moreover they communicate their light with praise, admiration and love, all derived from the supreme Sun of justice, the eternal and immutable God.

650. Into this admirable and divine order of revelation the Most High introduced most holy Mary, so that She might enjoy these privileges, which the courtiers of heaven possessed as becoming their nature. For this purpose He appointed the seraphim, whom I have mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of the first book, because they were supreme and nearest to the Divinity; also other angels of Mary's guard performed the same office, whenever, according to the divine will, it seemed befitting and necessary. The Queen of angels and men knew all these angels and others as they are in themselves, without dependence upon the senses or the phantasy, and without any hindrance from the mortal or earthly body. Through this vision and knowledge the seraphim and other angels of the Lord illuminated and purified Her, revealing to their Queen many mysteries, which for that very purpose they had learned from the Most High. And although this kind of illumination and intellectual vision was not continual in most holy Mary; it was very frequent, especially when, in order to give Her opportunity for more merits and divine movements of love, the Lord hid or absented Himself from Her, as shall be described afterwards (Infr. 725, Part II 719, 720). On such occasions He made use of the mediation of the angels, allowing their enlightenment to proceed in its order until it was communicated to their Queen.

651. This mode of illumination did not derogate from the dignity of the Mother of God and of the Mistress of the angels; for in the conferring of these benefits, the mode of their participation was not to be determined by

the dignity and sanctity of our sovereign Queen, since in that She was superior to all the angelic orders; but it was determined by the present state and condition of her nature in which She was inferior; for She was yet a wayfarer and of a human, bodily and mortal nature. By these illuminations She was to be raised to the angelic operation and estate though yet living in mortal flesh and subject to the natural use of the senses, and it was a great privilege, yet entirely proper to her sanctity and dignity. I believe that the hand of the Most High has extended this favor to other souls in mortal life, although not so frequently as to his most holy Mother, nor with such a plenitude and under such exalted conditions as in Her. If many doctors (not without good reason) conceded that saint Paul, Moses, and other saints have enjoyed beatific vision, it is credible, that other earthly wayfarers have shared this kind of knowledge of the angelic nature; for this favor is no more than to see intuitively the angelic substance. In regard to clearness, this vision corresponds to the one which I have first mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and in regard to the intellectual qualities it corresponds to the third mentioned in the same place, although it does not proceed by means of imprinted images.

652. The truth is, this privilege is not ordinary or common but very rare and extraordinary; and therefore it demands in the soul a great preparation and purity of conscience. It is incompatible with earthly affections, voluntary imperfections, or any leaning toward sin: for in order that the soul may enter into the angelic order it must lead a life more angelic than human; since if this supernal assimilation and sympathy is wanting, the union of such extremes would imply a monstrous disproportion. With the divine grace, however, the creature (although yet in earthly and corruptible body) can deny it-

self all that is demanded by its passions and inclinations, die to all visible things, eject from its memory all images of them, and live more in the spirit than in the flesh. And when it arrives at the enjoyment of true peace, tranquillity and quiet of spirit, which cause in it a sweet and loving serenity in the possession of the highest Good, then it is less incapable of being raised to the vision of the angelic spirits by intuitive clearness, of receiving the divine revelations, which they communicate to each other, and of experiencing the admirable effects of this kind of vision.

653. If those which our sovereign Queen received, correspond to her purity and love, their value cannot be estimated by men. The light communicated to Her in these visions of the seraphim is beyond human comparison; for to a certain extent the image of the Divinity is flashed from them, as from most pure spiritual mirrors, in which most holy Mary perceived it in all its infinite attributes and perfections. Also the glory, which the seraphim themselves enjoyed, was manifested to Her in an admirable manner by some of its effects; for as She saw intuitively the essence of the angels, She knew much of its secrets. By the insight into these things She was entirely inflamed and enkindled with divine love and many times wrapt in wonderful ecstasy. Hence in union with the seraphim and the angels She broke forth in canticles of praise, celebrating the incomparable glory of the Divinity, so that She excited the admiration of the heavenly spirits themselves. For though She was enlightened by them as regards the intellect, yet by her own acts of the will She left them far behind, and with a much greater force of love did She quickly ascend and arrive at union with the ultimate and the highest Good, whence She immediately received new impulses of the torrent of the Divinity (Psalm 35, 9) by which She was inundated. And

if the Seraphim had not been enjoying the presence of the infinite Object, which was the beginning and the end of their beatific love, they might well have been the pupils of their most holy Queen in divine love, just as She was theirs in regard to the illumination of the mind derived from them.

654. Next to the immediate vision of the spiritual and angelic substance, the more inferior intellectual vision of the same by infused species is more common, as we said also of the abstractive vision of the Divinity. This kind of vision the Queen of heaven enjoyed sometimes, but it was not so common with Her as the one mentioned; for though in other just souls the privilege of seeing the angels and saints by means of intellectual images is very rare and precious, yet in the Queen of angels it was not necessary, because She had a more exalted intercourse and knowledge of them. She, therefore, enjoyed this inferior kind of visions only when the Lord ordained that the angels should hide themselves and when the more exalted communion with them was to be interrupted for her greater merit and practice in virtue. In such time, She saw them by intellectual or imaginary species, as mentioned in the foregoing chapter. Divine effects are produced in other souls by these visions of angels through intellectual images; for these celestial beings become known to the mind in their quality as executors and ambassadors of the supreme King, and with them the soul holds sweet colloquy concerning the Lord, and concerning all celestial and heavenly things. The whole soul is illumined, taught, directed and governed, led on and urged onward in its ascent to the perfect union of divine love, and in its efforts to practice that which is the most consummate, refined and holy in spiritual life.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

655. Admirable, my daughter, is the love, the fidelity and the solicitude with which the angelic spirits assist mortals in their necessities; and most horrible is the forgetfulness, ingratitude and grossness on the part of men in failing to acknowledge this debt. In the bosom of the Most High, whose face they see (Matth. 8, 10) in beatific clearness, these heavenly spirits perceive the infinite paternal love of the Father in heaven for earthly men, and therefore they appreciate and estimate worthily the blood of the Lamb, by which men were bought and rescued, and they know the value of the souls thus purchased with the treasures of the Divinity. Thence arises their watchfulness and attention in securing the interests of the souls, which, on account of the value set upon them by the Most High, have been given into their charge. I wish thee to understand well, how by the ministry of these angels, mortals would receive great enlightenment, and incomparable favors from the Lord, if only they did not hinder them by their sins and abominations, and by their oblivion of this inestimable blessing. But as they block up the way, which God in his ineffable Providence has opened up for conducting them to eternal felicity, the greater part of them damn themselves, whereas, with the protection of the angels and with a proper estimate of his blessing, they could save themselves.

656. O my dearest daughter, since many men are so indifferent in attending to the paternal works of my Son and Lord, I seek in thee a special gratitude for this blessing. Since He has dealt with thee liberally in his appointment of angels for thy guard, be attentive to their intercourse and listen to their injunctions with reverence; give thyself over to their guidance, honor them as the am-

bassadors of the Most High, seek their favor, in order that, having been cleansed of thy sins and freed from imperfection, inflamed with divine love, thou mayest become so spiritualized, as to be fit to treat with them as their companion in the participation of the divine illuminations. These He will not withhold from thee, if thou on thy part dispose thyself in the manner I desire.

657. Since thou hast desired to know in the spirit of obedience, what was the reason that the holy angels communicated with me in so many kinds of visions, I will respond to thy desires, explaining more clearly, what thou hast understood and written with the aid of divine light. The cause of this privilege was, on the part of the Most High, his most liberal love, with which He pursued me, and on my part, it was the state of pilgrimage, in which I then found myself. For it was neither possible nor befitting, that this life should be altogether uniform in regard to the acts of virtue, by which the divine Wisdom wished to raise me above all creation. As this pilgrimage was to be performed by me as a human wayfarer, subject to the use of the senses with all its various coincidences of life in the practice of virtue, I sometimes acted altogether in a spiritual manner and without the hindrance of the senses, when the angels communicated with me as they do among themselves; at other times it was necessary for me to suffer and to be afflicted in the lower part of my soul or in my sensitive faculties; at other times again I suffered want, loneliness and interior dereliction. According to the vicissitudes of these different effects and conditions I received the favors and the visits of the holy angels. Many times then did I speak to them by intelligence, at others in imaginary species, at others in corporeal and sensible vision, according as my state and necessities demanded and the Most High ordained.

658. By all these means my faculties and senses were illumined and sanctified through the divine influences and blessings, in order that I might experience in reality all these operations and through all of them receive the influx of supernatural grace. But in regard to these favors, my dearest daughter, I wish thee to remember, that although God acted with such magnificent mercy toward me, He nevertheless followed his intention of conferring them upon me so lavishly not only because of my dignity as his Mother, but because He took into account my co-operation and disposition by which I concurred with his graces on my part. I withdrew all my faculties and senses from intercourse with created things, and rejecting all that was merely sensible and created, turned to the highest Good and centered all the powers of my will on his holy love. In this disposition of my soul I sanctified all my faculties by co-operation with these favors, visions and illuminations, having evacuated them of all human and terrestrial pleasures. So great was the reward of my works in mortal flesh, that thou canst not understand it, nor describe it with mortal tongue. The liberality of the Highest at once makes an advance payment of the blessings in this life as a pledge of those He has reserved for the eternal.

659. And although the powerful arm of God by these means wished to prepare me worthily from my Conception for the incarnation of the Word in my womb, and to sanctify and form my faculties and senses for the intercourse and communication with my Son: nevertheless, if other souls would dispose themselves in imitation of me, living not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, free and untouched by the earthly contagion, the Most High would show his fidelity to these souls as well and would not deny them his blessings and favors according to the equity of his divine Providence.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE MOST HOLY CHILD MARY IN THE TEMPLE; THE LORD PREPARES HER FOR TROUBLES, AND JOACHIM, HER FATHER, DIES.

660. We left our sovereign Princess, most holy Mary, passing the years of her childhood in the temple, while we made a diversion to speak of the virtues, gifts and divine revelations, which She, a child in years but an adult in supreme wisdom, received from the hand of the Most High and which She put to practical use in her life. The most holy Child grew in age and grace before God and men: but always in such a proportion, that zeal exceeded the powers of nature, and that grace was measured not by her age, but by the beneficent designs and high purposes of the Divinity, whose impetuous currents sought their gathering-place and resting-place in this City of God. The Most High continued his gifts and favors, renewing every hour the marvels of his powerful arm, as if all its activity were reserved solely for most holy Mary. And so well did her Majesty correspond in her tender age to this divine influx, that She filled the heart of the Lord with a perfect and adequate complacency, and all the angels of heaven with admiration. The celestial spirits were witnesses of something like a wonderful strife and competition between the Most High and the child Princess: the divine power, in order to enrich Her, daily drawing from his treasures new and old blessings reserved solely for the purest Mary, and She, as blessed earth, not only causing the seed of the divine word to sprout and

God's gifts and favors to yield fruit a hundredfold, as was the case with the saints; but exciting the admiration of all the heavens that She, a tender child, should exceed in love, thanksgiving, in praise and all virtues, the highest and most ardent seraphim, without losing time, place, occasion, or any service, in which She did not practice the highest possible perfection.

661. Even in the years of her tender infancy it was noticeable that She understood the Scriptures and She spent much time in reading them. As She was full of wisdom She conferred in her heart what She knew from the divine revelations made to her own self, with what is revealed to all men in the holy Scriptures; and therefore in her reading and private meditation She sent up continual and fervent prayers and petitions for the Redemption of the human race and for the incarnation of the Word. She read more ordinarily from the prophets Isaias and Jeremias and from the Psalms, because the mysteries of the Messias and the law of grace are more plainly expressed and repeated in these writings. In addition to what She herself understood and comprehended, She extended her knowledge by asking deep and wonderful questions, and proposing difficulties to the angels, and many times She spoke of the mystery of the humanity of the Word with incomparable tenderness, lovingly wondering, that He was to become an infant, that He was to be born of a Virgin Mother, come to manhood, as other men, suffer, and die for all the children of Adam.

662. In these conferences and questionings the holy angels and seraphim gave their answers, illuminating Her, confirming and inflaming Her virginal heart with new ardors of divine love. But they always concealed from Her her own most high dignity, although She many times offered Herself in profoundest humility as

a slave to the Lord and to the happy Mother, whom He was to select for his birth into the world. At other times, interrogating the holy angels, She spoke full of admiration: "My princes and lords, is it possible that the Creator himself is to be born of a creature and shall call her Mother? That the Omnipotent and the Infinite, He that has made the heavens and is not encompassed by them, should be enclosed in the womb of a woman, and should clothe Himself with the limited human nature? He that vested in beauty the elements, the heavens and the angels, is to become subject to suffering? Is it possible, that there should be a Woman endowed with our human nature, who shall be so fortunate as to be able to call Him Son, who has made Her out of nothing, and that She should be called Mother by Him, who is uncreated and who created the whole universe? O unheard of wonder! If the Author himself would not have declared it, how could earthly frailty conceive a thing so magnificent? O miracle of all his miracles! O happy eyes that shall see it and happy times that shall merit it!" To these sentiments and exclamations the angels would on their part respond, explaining these divine sacraments, in as far as they did not involve and affect her own Self.

663. Each of these high and ardent affections of humility in the child Mary was as one of those locks of the Spouse, or darts of love, with which She so wounded the heart of God, that, if it had not been befitting to wait until She had arrived at the competent and opportune age for conceiving and bringing forth the incarnate Word, his delight could not (according to our way of thinking) contain itself and would have assumed humanity at once in her womb. But although She was fit for this mystery from her childhood, as far as merits and grace were concerned, He waited in order to conceal and disguise more

effectively the sacraments of the Incarnation, and in order to protect and safeguard the honor of his most holy Mother by postponing her virginal parturition to the age approaching that of married women. During this delay the Lord (according to our concept) entertained Himself with the affectionate discourses and love-canticles of his Daughter and Spouse, who was soon to be the worthy Mother of the divine Word. These canticles and hymns of our Queen and Lady, as has been shown to me by special enlightenment, were so many and so exalted, that, if they were written, the holy Church would possess many more than all the Prophets and Saints have left behind; for She expressed and comprehended all that they have written, and over and above understood and expressed much more than they ever could attain. But the Most High has provided, that the Church militant should possess abundantly sufficient matter of that kind in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets; while his revelations to his most holy Mother, are preserved and written in his divine mind, afterwards to be made known to the triumphant Church in as far as shall serve for the accidental glory of the blessed.

664. Moreover the divine condescension yielded to the holy wish of Mary our Mistress, that, for the increase of her prudent humility and for an example of her great virtues to mortals, the sacrament of the King should remain concealed (Tob. 12, 7), and, whenever it became necessary partly to reveal it for the service of his Majesty and the welfare of the Church, the most holy Mary proceeded with such heavenly prudence, that though She was the Teacher, She never ceased to be the most humble Disciple. In her infancy She consulted the angels and followed their counsels; after the incarnate Word was born, She looked upon the Onlybegotten as her Teacher

and example in all her actions and at the close of his mysterious life and after his Ascension into heaven, the great Queen of the universe obeyed the Apostles, as we shall relate. This is one of the reasons why, in the Apocalypse, saint John the evangelist disguised the mysteries of the Lady, beneath such enigmatic words, that they can be interpreted and applied just as well to the Church militant as to the triumphant.

665. The Most High resolved, that the plenitude of the graces and virtues of the princess Mary should, as it were, anticipate the time set for reaching the apex of her merits, and that they should extend to the most difficult and magnanimous undertakings, as much as possible, even in her most tender years. In one of the visions in which the Majesty of God manifested Itself to Her, He said: "My Spouse and my Dove, I love thee with an infinite love and I desire of thee what is most pleasing in my eyes and the fulfillment of all my desires. Thou art not unaware, my Daughter, of the hidden treasure, which is contained in hardships and tribulations, so much dreaded by the blind ignorance of mortals, nor is it unknown to thee that my Onlybegotten, when He shall clothe Himself in human nature, shall teach the way of the cross as well in words as in deeds; that He shall leave it as a heritage to my chosen ones; and that He shall choose it for Himself and establish upon it the law of grace, making humility and patience in suffering the foundation of the firmness and excellence of that law. For this is best suited to the present condition of human nature, and much more so, after it has been depraved and evilly inclined by so many sins. It is also conformable to my equity and providence, that the mortals should attain and merit for themselves the crown of glory through hardships and the cross, since my onlybegotten Son is to merit it by the same means

in human flesh. Therefore, my Spouse, thou wilt understand, that, having chosen thee by my right hand for my delight, and having enriched thee with my gifts, it would not be just, that my grace should be idle in thy heart, nor that thy love should want its fruit, nor that thou shouldst be excluded from the inheritance of my elect. Hence I wish that thou dispose thyself for tribulations and sorrows for love of Me."

666. To this proposal of the Most High the invincible Princess Mary answered with a more courageous heart than all the saints and martyrs have ever shown in the world; and She said: "Lord God and my highest King, all my faculties and their operations, and my being itself, which I have received of thy infinite bounty, I hold in readiness as a sacrifice to thy divine pleasure, wishing that it be fulfilled entirely according to the desires of thy infinite wisdom and goodness. And if Thou give me any freedom of choice in regard to anything, I wish only to chose suffering unto death in love for Thee; and I beseech Thee, my only Good, that Thou make of thy slave a sacrifice and holocaust of suffering acceptable in thy eyes. I acknowledge, Lord, powerful and most liberal God, my debt, and that no creature owes to Thee so great a return, nor are all of them together so much indebted to Thee as I alone, who am so entirely unequal to the task of discharging this indebtedness to thy magnificence. But if Thou wilt admit suffering as a sort of return, let all the sorrows and tribulations of death come over me. I will only ask for thy divine protection, and, prostrate before the throne of thy infinite Majesty, I supplicate Thee not to forsake me. Remember, O my Lord, the faithful promises, which Thou hast made to our Ancestors and Prophets, that Thou wilt favor the just, stand by those who are in tribulation, console the afflicted, be a protection

and a defense to them in their tribulations. True are thy words, infallible and certain are thy promises; the heavens and the earth shall sooner fall to pieces than that thy words should ever fail. The malice of the creature cannot extinguish thy charity toward those that hope in thy mercy; fulfill in me thy holy and perfect will."

667. The Most High accepted this morning offering from his tender Spouse and holy child Mary, and with a most benign countenance He said to Her: "Beautiful art thou in thy thoughts, Daughter of the Prince, my Dove, my beloved and chosen One. I accept thy desires as highly pleasing to me and I wish that as a beginning of their fulfillment thou take notice, that according to my divine ordainment, thy father Joachim must pass from this mortal to the eternal and immortal life. His death will happen shortly and He will pass in peace and shall be placed among the saints in limbo, to await the Redemption of the human race." This announcement did not disturb the royal heart of the Princess of heaven, the blessed Mary; but as the love of children for their parents is a just debt of nature, and as in this most holy Child this love had attained its highest perfection, the natural sorrow for the loss of her father Joachim could not be wanting, for She loved him with a holy love. The tender and sweet Child therefore felt, that this sorrowful compassion was perfectly compatible with the serenity of her magnanimous heart, and, working in all things with grandeur, giving nature and grace each their due, She offered an ardent prayer for her father saint Joachim. She besought the Lord to give him grace to depend upon Him as his powerful and true God in his transit through a blessed death; and asked Him to defend Joachim against the demon especially in that hour, preserve him for and constitute him among the number of the elect, since dur-

ing his life He had confessed and magnified his admirable and holy name. And in order to oblige his Majesty the more, the most faithful Daughter offered to suffer all that the Lord might ordain.

668. The Lord accepted this petition and consoled the heavenly Child by assuring Her, that He would assist her father as a most merciful and kind Rewarder of those that love and serve Him, and that He would place him among the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At the same time He prepared Her anew for the acceptance and endurance of troubles. Eight days before the death of the patriarch Joachim the most holy Mary received another notice from the Lord, advising Her of the day and hour in which He was to die. His death took place only six months after Her entrance into the temple. Having received this notice from the Lord, She requested the twelve angels, mentioned by saint John in the Apocalypse, to assist her father Joachim and to comfort and console Him in his sickness, which they did. For the last hours of his life She sent all the angels of her guard asking the Lord, to make them visible to him for his greater consolation. God conceded this favor and confirmed all the wishes of his chosen and only One; and the great patriarch, most happy Joachim, saw the thousand angels which guarded Mary. In response to her prayer and wishes the Almighty allowed his graces to overflow, commanding the angels to address Joachim as follows:

669. "Man of God, may the Most High and powerful Lord be thy eternal salvation and may he send thee from his holy place the necessary and opportune help for thy soul. Mary thy Daughter has sent us in order to assist thee in this hour, in which thou must pay the debt of mortality to thy Creator. She is a most faithful and powerful Intercessor before the Almighty, in whose name

and peace thou wilt now pass consoled and joyous from this world, because He has made thee the father of such a blessed Daughter. Although his incomprehensible Majesty, on account of his hidden decrees, has not as yet revealed the sacraments and dignity, in which He shall invest thy Daughter, He wishes thee to know it now in order that thou mayest magnify and praise Him, and in order that the pain and sorrow of natural death may be relieved by the joy of thy spirit at this news. Mary, thy Daughter, is chosen and ordained by the Almighty as the One, in whom the divine Word shall vest Himself with human flesh and form. She is to be the happy Mother of the Messias and the Blessed among women, the most exalted among all creatures, and only inferior to God himself. Thy most fortunate Daughter is to restore what the human race lost by the first sin, and She is the high mountain on which is to be established and constructed the new law of grace. Since thou leavest to the world a Daughter, through whom God will restore it and prepare a full remedy, do thou part from it in the joy of thy soul, and may the Lord bless thee from Sion (Psalm 127, 5) and constitute thee in the inheritance of the saints and bring thee to the vision and enjoyment of the blessed Jerusalem."

670. During these words of the holy angels to Joachim, his spouse, holy Anne, stood at the head of his bed and by divine disposition She heard and understood what they said. In the same moment the holy patriarch lost the use of speech and, treading into the path common to all flesh, he commenced his agony in a marvelous struggle between his joy at this message and the pain of death. In this conflict of the interior powers of his soul he made many fervent acts of divine love, of faith, of admiration, of praise, of thanksgiving, of humility and heroic acts of many other virtues. Thus absorbed in

the knowledge of so divine a mystery, he arrived at the term of his natural life and died the precious death of the saints (Psalm 115, 15). His holy soul was carried by the angels to the limbo of the Patriarchs and just souls; and, for a new consolation and light in the protracted night in which they lived, the Most High sent the soul of Joachim as the last messenger and legate of the Lord to announce to the whole congregation of the just: that the dawn of the eternal day was at hand; that the morning light was breaking upon the world in most holy Mary, the Daughter of Joachim and Anne; that from Her was to be brought forth the Sun of the Divinity, Christ, the Redeemer of all the human race. This great news the holy fathers and the just in limbo heard and received with jubilee and in their exultation they sang many hymns of thanksgiving to the Most High.

671. This happy death of the patriarch saint Joachim happened as I said about a half year after his most holy Daughter Mary had entered the temple. Hence She was three and a half years old, when She was left without an earthly father. The age of the patriarch was sixty-nine years, divided as follows: at the age of forty-six years he accepted saint Anne as his spouse, in the twentieth year of his marriage, they were blessed with most holy Mary; and the three and a half years of the age of her age at his death complete the sixty-nine and a half years, a few days more or less.

672. After the death of the holy Patriarch and father of our Queen the angels of her guard at once returned to the presence of Mary and related to Her what had happened in the passing away of her father: and immediately the most prudent Child turned in solicitous prayers to the Lord, asking Him to console, govern and assist her Mother Anne with fatherly kindness in her solitude after the death of her husband. Saint Anne also sent notice of the

death of Joachim to the instructress of the heavenly Princess, asking Her to console the Child in breaking this news to Her. The teacher acted accordingly and the most wise Child listened to her thankfully, concealing her own knowledge. However it was with the patience and modesty of a Queen, and of one who was not oblivious of the possibility of the event, which her instructress related to Her as new. Acting in all things according to the highest perfection, She betook Herself at once into the temple, reiterating her sacrifice of praise, humility, patience and of other virtues, and progressing always with more accelerated and beautiful steps in the eyes of the Most High (Cant. 7, 1). As a climax of these exercises, She, as usual, requested the holy angels to concur and assist in blessing God.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

673. My daughter, renovate many times in the secret of thy heart thy esteem for the blessing of tribulations, which the hidden providence of God dispenses for the justification of mortals. These are the judgments justified in themselves (Psalm 18, 10, 11) and more valuable than precious stones and gold, more sweet than the honeycomb, to those who know how to hold them in proper esteem. I wish thee to remember, my beloved, that to suffer and to be afflicted with or without one's fault is a benefit of which one cannot be worthy without special and great mercy of the Almighty; moreover to be allowed to suffer for one's sins, is not only a mercy, but is demanded by justice. Behold, however, the great insanity of the children of Adam nowadays in desiring and seeking after emoluments, benefits, and favors agreeable to their senses, and in sleeplessly striving to avert from themselves, that which is painful or includes any hardship or trouble. It would be to their greatest benefit to seek tribulations dili-

gently even when unmerited, yet they strive by all means to avoid them even when merited, and even though they cannot be happy and blessed without having undergone such sufferings.

674. When gold is untouched by the furnace-heat, the iron by the file, the grain by the grinding stone or flail, the grapes by the winepress, they are all useless and will not attain the end for which they are created. Why then will mortals continue to deceive themselves, by expecting, in spite of their sins, to become pure and worthy of enjoying God, without the furnace or the file of sorrows? If they were incapable and unworthy of attaining to the crown and reward of the infinite and eternal Good when innocent, how can they attain it, when they are in darkness and in disgrace before the Almighty? In addition to this the sons of perdition are exerting all their powers to remain unworthy and hostile to God and in evading crosses and afflictions which are the paths left open for returning to God, in rejecting the light of the intellect which is the means of recognizing the deceptiveness of visible things, in refusing the nourishment of the just which is the only means of grace, the price of glory, and above all in repudiating the legitimate inheritance, selected by my Son and Lord for Himself and for all his elect, since He was born and lived continually in afflictions and died upon the cross.

675. By such standards, my daughter, must thou measure the value of suffering, which the worldly will not understand. Since they are unworthy of heavenly knowledge, they despise it in proportion to their ignorance. Rejoice and congratulate thyself in thy sufferings, and whenever the Almighty deigns to send thee any, hasten to meet it and welcome it as one of his blessings and pledges of his glorious love. Furnish thy heart with magnanimity and constancy, so that when occasion of suf-

fering is given thee thou mayest bear it with the same equanimity as the prosperous and agreeable things. Be not filled with sadness in executing that which thou hast promised in gladness, for the Lord loves those that are equally ready to give as to receive. Sacrifice thy heart and all thy faculties as a holocaust of patience and chant in new hymns of praise and joy the justification of the Most High, whenever in the place of thy peregrination He signalizes and distinguishes thee as his own with the signs of his friendship which are no other than the tribulations and trials of suffering.

676. Take notice, my dearest, that my most holy Son and myself are trying to find among those who have arrived at the way of the cross, some soul, whom We can instruct systematically in this divine science and whom We can withdraw from the worldly and diabolical wisdom, in which the sons of Adam, with blind stubbornness, are rejecting the salutary discipline of sufferings. If thou wishest to be our disciple enter into this school, in which alone is taught the doctrine of the cross and the manner of reaching true peace and veritable delights. With this wisdom the earthly love of sensible pleasures and riches is not compatible; nor the vain ostentation and pomp, which fascinates the blear-eyed worldlings, who are so covetous of passing honors, and so full of ignorant admiration for costly grandeur. Thou, my daughter, choose for thyself the better part of being among the lowly and the forgotten ones of this world. I was Mother of the Godman himself, and, on that account, Mistress of all creation conjointly with my Son: yet I was little known and my Son very much despised by men. If this doctrine were not most valuable and secure, We would not have taught it by word and example. This is the light, which shines in the darkness (John 1, 7), loved by the elect and abhorred by the reprobate.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRINCESS OF HEAVEN BEGINS TO SUFFER AFFLICTION; GOD ABSENTS HIMSELF FROM MOST HOLY MARY: HER SWEET AND AMOROUS SIGHS.

677. The Most High, who in his infinite wisdom dispenses and regulates the welfare of his beloved ones according to weight and measure, resolved to exercise our heavenly Princess with some afflictions adapted to her age and state of childhood. Though She was always great in grace, He wished by this means to increase her glory. For entirely filled with grace and wisdom was our Child Mary; nevertheless it was befitting, that She should learn by experience and thus make advancement and understand better the science of suffering, which only experience can bring to its ultimate perfection and thoroughness. During the brief course of her tender years She had enjoyed the delights of the Most High and his caresses, and of the angels and of her parents, and in the temple, the tender love of her teachers and of the priests, because in the eyes of all of them She was most gracious and amiable. It was now time that She should commence to know all the good She possessed in another light and by another knowledge; namely, the one which is acquired by the absence and privation of the good, and that She make use of it for the practice of those virtues, which arise from comparison between the state of favors and caresses with the state of dereliction, aridity and tribulation.

678. The first affliction, which our Princess suffered, was that the Lord suspended the continual visions, which

He had so far vouchsafed Her. So much the greater was the sorrow occasioned Her thereby, in proportion as it was a new and unaccustomed experience and in proportion as the treasure thus withdrawn was high and precious. Also the holy angels concealed themselves from Her, and at the withdrawal from her sight of so many, so excellent and heavenly beings, which took place all at once (although they did not cease to surround Her invisibly for her protection), that most pure Soul seemed to Herself entirely forsaken and left alone in the dark night occasioned by the absence of her Beloved.

679. It was a great surprise to our little Queen; for the Lord, though He had in general prepared Her for the coming of tribulations, had not specified their nature. And as the innocent heart of the most simple Dove harbored no thoughts, and entertained no practical conclusions except such as were conformable to her humility and incomparable love, She explained all according to this same light. In her humility She began to think, that She had not merited the further presence and possession of the lost Good on account of her ingratitude; and in her inflamed love She sighed and yearned after It with such great and loving affection and sorrow, that there are no words to express them. She turned with her whole soul to the Lord in this new state and said to Him:

680. "Highest God and Lord of all creation, infinite in bounty and rich in mercies, I confess, my Lord, that such a vile creature cannot merit thy favors and my soul in utmost sorrow reproaches itself with its own ingratitude and with the loss of thy friendship. If my ingratitude has eclipsed the Sun, which vivified, animated and illumined me, and if I have been remiss in giving thanks for the great benefits, I acknowledge, my Lord and Shepherd, the sin of my great negligence. If, like an ignorant and

simple little sheep, I did not know how to be thankful and do what is most acceptable in thy eyes, see me prostrate on the earth, adhering to the dust, in order to be raised from my poverty and destitution by Thee, my God, who dwellest on high. Thy powerful hands have formed me (Job 10, 8), and Thou canst not be ignorant of our composition (Psalm 102, 14) and in what kind of a vase Thou has placed thy treasures. My soul wastes away in bitterness (Psalm 30, 11); and in thy absence, since Thou art its sweetest life, only Thou canst restore its drooping life. To whom shall I go in thy absence? Whither shall I turn my eyes without having light to direct them? Who shall console me, when all is affliction? Who shall preserve me from death, when there is no life left?"

681. She also turned toward the angels and continued without ceasing in her loving complaints, saying to them: "Celestial Princes, ambassadors of the great and highest King and most faithful friends of my soul: why have you also left me? Why do also you deprive me of your sweet countenances and deny me your intercourse? But I do not wonder, my lords, at your displeasure, if through my unthankfulness I have merited to fall into the disgrace of your and my Creator. Lights of the heavens, enlighten me in my ignorance in this matter, and if I have been at fault, correct me and obtain again for me the pardon of my Lord. Most noble courtiers of the celestial Jerusalem, have pity on my sorrow and dereliction: tell me where is my Beloved; tell me where He has hidden Himself (Cant. 3, 3). Tell me where I can find Him without wandering about, (Cant. 1, 6) and without going through the gatherings of all the creatures. But woe to me, for you do not answer, though you are so courteous and well know the hiding-place of my Spouse, since He never withdraws his face and his beauty from your sight!"

682. Thereupon She turned toward all the rest of creation and in continual anxieties of her love She spoke to them and said: "Without doubt you also, being thankful, and being armed against all the ungrateful, are exasperated against her, who was ungrateful. But even if by the goodness of the Lord you permit me to remain in your midst, although I am so vile, you cannot thereby satisfy my longings. Very beautiful and extensive are ye, O heavens; beautiful and refulgent are the planets and all the stars; great and mighty are the elements, the earth is adorned and clothed in the perfumed plants and herbs, innumerable are the fishes of the waters, admirable are the elevations of the sea, (Psalm 92, 4), swift are the birds in their feathery weight, hidden are the minerals, courageous are the animals in their strength, and all of these together serve as a gradual ascent and in a sweet harmony teach the way to my Beloved; yet they are but circuitous paths for one that loves Him, and if I course swiftly over them I find myself at the end absent from my blessedness. For with the measured approach of these creatures to his unmeasurable bounty, my flight is not content, my sorrow is not allayed, my pains are unrelieved, my anguish increases, my desires are augmented, my heart is more inflamed and faints away in the unsatiating love of mere earthly things. O sweet death in the absence of my life! O sorrowful life in the absence of my very soul and of my Beloved! What shall I do? Whither shall I turn? How can I live, yet how can I die? Since my life is wanting, what force sustains me? O all you creatures, that with your ever renewed existence and perfections give me such tokens of my Lord, attend and see whether there is a sorrow like unto my sorrow!" (Thren. 1, 12.)

683. Our heavenly Lady indulged her sorrow in many other discourses, expressing them in spoken words, such

as cannot be conceived by other created understanding; for She alone possessed the wisdom and love properly to estimate the meaning of the absence of God in a soul, since She alone had known and enjoyed his presence in its highest beatitude. But if even the angels, in a holy and loving emulation, were filled with admiration to see a mere creature and so tender a Child exercising such a variety of acts of the most prudent humility, of faith, of love, of affection, and such flights of a loving heart, who can ever explain the pleasure and delight, which the Lord himself took in the soul of the chosen One and in its aspirations, of which each one wounded the heart of his Majesty and which proceeded from a greater and more loving graciousness than He had given to the seraphim? And if they altogether, being in the continual presence of the Divinity could not exercise or imitate the example given by the most holy Mary, nor fulfill the laws of love so perfectly as She in the absence and concealment of her God, what was the complacency of the most holy Trinity in this Creature? This is a mystery hidden to our littleness; but it is meet, that we worship it in wonder and admire it in all reverence.

684. Our most innocent Dove found no peace for her heart nor any footrest for her affections (Gen. 8, 9) while thus with incessant sighing She took her flight through all the range of creation and beyond. Many times She sought to approach the Lord in tears and loving complaints, She turned to the angels of her guard and addressed all the creatures as if they were capable of reason; then She would ascend to that highest habitation by her penetrating intellect and her most ardent affections, where the highest Good had met Her and where She reciprocally with It had enjoyed ineffable delights. But the most high Lord, her beloved Spouse, who allowed Her to possess and yet

not enjoy Him as before, inflamed by this possession of Him only more and more her most pure heart, increasing her merits and showering upon Her continually new, though hidden gifts, in order that, in possessing Him the more, She might love the better, and being more loved and possessed, She seek Him with ever greater anxiousness and contrivances of her fiery love. "I seek Him," said the heavenly Princess, "and I do not find Him (Cant. 2, 2); again I was awakened and, running through the streets and squares of the city of God, I renewed my anxieties. But alas for me! that my hands distilled the myrrh (Cant. 5, 5); my diligence is of no avail, my exertions serve only to increase my sorrow (Cant, 6, 7). My Beloved absents Himself: I call Him and He does not answer me, I turn my eyes to seek Him, but the guards and the sentinels of the city, and all creatures were an annoyance to me and offended my sight. Daughters of Jerusalem, holy and just souls, you I beseech, you I supplicate, if you meet my Beloved, tell Him that I am faint and that I am dying with love."

685. In these sweet and loving lamentations our Queen continued for several days, like the humble spikenard giving forth most fragrant odors of sweetness. But the Lord remained unmoved by her anxieties and secreted Himself in the hidden recesses of her most faithful heart. The divine Providence, for its greater glory and for the superabundant merit of his Spouse, protracted this conflict in such a manner, that it continued for some time, though not very long; in the meanwhile our heavenly Lady suffered more spiritual torments and anxieties than all the saints together. For She gradually began to be alarmed by the fear of having lost God and fallen into disgrace on account of her own faults; and no one can estimate or know, except the Lord himself, what and how

great was the grief of that burning heart, which had known how to love so much. To weigh this grief belongs to God alone, and in order that She might feel it in its fullest extent, She was left by God to the overwhelming anxiety and fear of having lost Him.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MY LADY AND QUEEN GAVE ME.

686. My daughter, all goods are estimated according to the appreciation in which creatures hold them: in so far they value them, as they know them to be good. But since there is only one true Good, and all the others merely fictitious and apparent, it follows, that only the highest Good is to be appreciated and recognized. Then only shalt thou give Him true appreciation and love, when thou shalt enjoy and esteem Him above all created things. By this appreciation and love will also be measured the sorrow of losing Him and from this thou canst understand somewhat my sentiments, at the time when the eternal God absented Himself from me, leaving me in my fears lest perhaps I had lost Him through my own fault. There is no doubt, that many times the sorrows of this anxiety and the force of love would have deprived me of life, if the Lord himself had not preserved it.

687. Imagine then, what ought to be the grief of losing God really by sin, if, without the bad effects of sin, the absence of our true Good could cause such terrible suffering to the soul, knowing at the same time, that it has not lost Him, but still possesses Him, though hidden and disguised to its present consciousness. But this wisdom seems far from the mind of carnal men: with a most perverse blindness they continue to make much of the visible and fictitious good, and they torment themselves and are disconsolate, whenever it fails them. Because they never taste or recognize the highest and truest Good,

they take no thought or reckoning of It. And although my most holy Son has brought a remedy for this dreadful ignorance contracted by the first sin, by meriting for men faith and charity, thereby affording them the possibility of knowing and experiencing to a certain extent the Good, which they never have experienced; yet, O sorrow, how easily charity is wasted and set aside for any kind of pleasure, and how often faith remains without any fruit and is involved in death! The sons of darkness live as if they had only a counterfeit or doubtful connection with eternity,

688. Fear, my soul, this so slightly accounted danger; rouse thyself and live always in watchfulness and preparation for the attacks of the enemies, who never sleep. Let thy meditation day and night be, how thou canst provide against losing the highest Good, which thou lovest. It is not befitting that thou sleep or slumber in the midst of invisible enemies. If sometimes thy Beloved hides Himself from thee, hope in patience and seek Him solicitously without ceasing, since thou knowest not his secret judgments. For the time of his absence and temptation provide thyself with the oil of charity and good intention, so that it fail thee not in time of necessity and that thou mayest not be rejected with the foolish and negligent virgins.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OTHER AFFLICTIONS OF OUR QUEEN, SOME OF WHICH WERE PERMITTED BY THE LORD THROUGH THE AGENCY OF CREATURES AND OF THE ANCIENT SERPENT.

689. The Most High continued to hide and conceal Himself from the Princess of heaven; and to this affliction, which was the most severe, his Majesty added others in order to increase her merit, her grace and her reward, thus inflaming more and more the most pure love of the heavenly Lady. The great dragon and ancient serpent was not unwatchful of the heroic works of the most holy Mary: although he could not attain to the knowledge of her interior acts, since they were hidden from his view, yet he scrutinized the exterior ones which were so high and so perfect as to arouse the pride and indignation of that envious fiend; for the purity and the sanctity of the Child Mary tormented him beyond all calculation.

690. In his restless fury he called a conventicle of the infernal leaders in order to consult about the matter with the higher powers of hell. He addressed them as follows: "The great triumph which we have until now obtained in the world by the possession of so many souls who are altogether subject to our wills, is, I am afraid and anxious, about to be undone and counteracted by a Woman; we cannot make light of such a danger, for we have been warned since our creation, and afterward heard the sentence confirmed against us, that the Woman shall crush our head (Gen. 3, 15). Therefore we must be watchful and discard all carelessness. You have already

been notified of a Child, which was born of Anne, and is growing in age and is at the same time distinguishing Herself in virtue: I have paid careful attention to all her actions and movements, and I have not been able to discover in Her the effects of the seeds of malice, which usually begin to show themselves at the dawn of reason and at the beginning of the activity of the passions in the rest of the children of Adam. I have always seen Her composed and most perfect, without being able to incline or induce Her to fall into the slightest human imperfections, which are so natural in the other children. On this account I fear, lest She be the one chosen as Mother of Him who is to become Man."

691. "Yet I cannot convince myself of this; for She was born as the rest of women, and subject to the common laws of nature, her parents offered prayers and sacrifices in atonement for Her and their own sins, and brought Her to the temple just like other women. Even if She is not the one chosen as our enemy, her childhood points to great things and her exquisite virtue and holiness gives promise of still greater things later on; nor can I bear the prudence and discretion with which She acts in all her affairs. Her wisdom enrages me, her modesty irritates me, her humility annihilates me and oppresses me, and her whole behavior provokes me to unbearable wrath. I abhor Her more than all the children of Adam. There is in Her a special power, which often makes it impossible for me to approach Her; if I assail Her with suggestions, She does not admit them, and all my efforts in her regard until this hour have been entirely fruitless. Hence it is important for us all that we find a remedy; and we must make the greatest exertions, lest our power be ruined. I desire the destruction of this soul more than that of all the world. Tell me then, what means and

what contrivances must we use in order to overcome Her. I will certainly offer high and liberal rewards to any one who shall accomplish her downfall."

692. The matter was ventilated in that confused synagogue, convoked solely for our ruin, and one of the chiefs of the horrible council said: "Our chief and Lord, do not allow thyself to be tormented by such a small matter, for a weak little Maiden cannot be so invincible and powerful as all of us that follow thee. Thou hast deceived Eve, (Gen. 3, 4), dragging her down from the high position which she held, and through her thou didst also conquer her head Adam; then why shouldst thou not be able to overcome this Woman, her descendant, who was born after the first fall? Promise thyself even at this moment such a victory; and in order to obtain it we will persist in tempting Her though She resist many times, and, if necessary, we will not stop at yielding some of our greatness and haughtiness, in the hope of finally deceiving Her. If that does not suffice, we will try to destroy her honor or her life."

693. Other demons added their advice and said to Lucifer: "By experience we know, O powerful chief, that to bring about the downfall of many souls, the most effective way is to make use of other creatures, and by their means we often succeed where we otherwise fail. Let us then plan and contrive the ruin of this Woman in this way, first finding out the best time and the most favorable opportunity. Above all it is necessary, that we apply all our sagacity and astuteness to make Her lose grace by some sin. As soon as this mainstay and bulwark of the just is lost to Her, we can persecute and ensnare Her in her forsakeness, and there will be no one to snatch Her from our grasp, and we must exert ourselves to reduce Her to despair of all remedy."

694. Lucifer expressed his thanks for these encouraging counsels of his followers and co-operators in crime. He commanded and exhorted the most astute in malice among them to accompany him as leader in this arduous enterprise; for he did not wish to trust it to other hands. Although the demons assisted him, Lucifer himself in person was always at the fore in tempting Mary and her most holy Son in the desert, as well as during the whole course of their lives, as we shall see later on.

695. In the meanwhile our heavenly Princess continued to sigh and grieve over the absence of her Beloved, and thus the infernal squadron found Her, when they rushed forward to begin their temptations. But the divine power, which overshadowed Her, hindered the assaults of Lucifer, so that he could not approach very closely to Her, nor could he execute all that he had intended. By permission of God the hellish host excited in her faculties many suggestions and various thoughts of highest iniquity and malice; for the Lord did not judge it to be alien to the Mother of Grace, that She should be tempted in all things, although She was to be without sin in temptation, as was afterwards her most holy Son.

696. It cannot easily be conceived how much in this new conflict the most pure and innocent heart of Mary suffered, seeing Herself assailed by suggestions so foreign and so distant from the ineffable purity and nobility of her heavenly mind. When the ancient serpent perceived the affliction and tears of the great Lady, he imagined that he had on this account more power over Her, being blinded by his own pride and not knowing the secrets of heaven. Therefore, animating his infernal helpers, he said to them: "Let us persecute Her now, let us persecute Her; already it seems we are gaining our end, for She feels sorrowful, which is an opening for discouragement."

In this mistaken conviction, they suggested new thoughts of dejection and despair, and they assailed Her with terrible imaginations, but in vain; for as this flawless stone was struck by occasions of more exalted virtues, so also it gave forth more generously the sparks and flames of divine love. Our invincible Queen was so superior to this infernal battery, that her interior showed no signs of change nor even of an understanding of such terrible suggestions, except in so far as to concentrate Herself the more in the exercise of her incomparable virtues and allow the flames of divine love, which burned in her breast, to ascend so much the higher.

697. The dragon, though seeing her courage and constancy, and though feeling the force of the divine assistance, knew nothing of the hidden wisdom and prudence of our sovereign Queen. Nevertheless he persisted in his pride and besieged the City of God in diverse ways and several kinds of warfare. The astute enemy during this warfare often changed his engines of war, but his machinery was like the sting of a weak hornet against a diamond, or adamantine wall. Our Princess was that strong woman (Prov. 31, 11) on whom the heart of her husband confidently relied, without the least anxiety lest his desires should be frustrated in Her. Her adornments were fortitude (Prov. 31, 25) which filled Her with beauty, and her vestments were purity and charity, which served Her as a helmet. The unclean and proud serpent could not look upon this Creature without being blinded anew in the fury of his confusion; therefore he resolved to take away her life, and the horde of malignant spirits began to exert their utmost powers toward this end. In this attempt they spent some time, but with just as little success.

698. The knowledge of this hidden mystery caused in

me great wonder, especially when I considered the extremes, to which the fury of Lucifer was allowed to proceed against the most holy Mary in her tender years and when I beheld the hidden and vigilant defense and protection of the Most High. I saw how attentive the Lord was toward his chosen and only One among creatures; and I saw at the same time all hell lashed into fury against Her and exerting against Her in fullest indignation such a wrath as had never till then been exerted against any other creature; and I saw the facility with which God neutralizes the infernal power and astuteness. O more than unhappy Lucifer! How much greater is thy pride and arrogance than thy strength! (Isaias 16, 6.) Very weak and helpless art thou in spite of thy high-flown pretentions; begin to confide less in thyself and expect no such great triumphs; for a tender Child crushes thy head and sends thee back conquered in all things and altogether vanquished. Acknowledge now that thou canst do and knowest but little, since thou wast even ignorant of the sacrament of the King. Acknowledge that his power has humiliated thee by the instrument thou hadst despised, by a feeble Woman, by a Child in its natural weakness. O how evident would thy ignorance also become in regard to men, if they would avail themselves of the protection of the Most High, and of the example, the imitation and the intercession of that victorious and triumphant Mistress of angels and men!

699. During these varying temptations and combats the fervent prayers of most holy Mary never ceased, and She spoke to the Lord: "Now, O my most high God, while I am in tribulation, be with me (Psalm 90, 15); now that I call to Thee with my whole heart and seek thy justifications, (Psalm 118, 14) let my prayers come to thy ears; now that I suffer such violence, wilt Thou

answer for me (Isaias 38, 14). Thou, my Lord and Father, be my strength and my refuge (Psalm 30, 4), and because of thy holy name Thou wilt deliver me from danger; thou wilt lead me the sure way and nourish me as thy Daughter." She repeated also many mysteries of the holy Scriptures, especially passages from the Psalms, to invoke his aid against the invisible enemies. With these invincible arms, losing not an atom of interior peace, equanimity and resignation, but rather confirming Herself more therein, She raised her spirit on high, battled with, resisted, and conquered satan to the inexpressible delight of the Lord and for her greater merit.

700. After the most holy Virgin had successfully fought these secret temptations and battles, the serpent instituted a new conflict by means of creatures. For this purpose he secretly kindled the sparks of envy and emulation against the most holy Mary in the hearts of her maiden companions of the temple. This contagion was much the harder to counteract, as it arose from the punctuality with which our heavenly Princess distinguished Herself in the practice of all virtues, growing in wisdom and grace before God and man. For where the prodding of ambition is, the very light of virtue darkens and blinds the judgment, and at last enkindles the flames of envy. The dragon through his secret suggestions persuaded these simple maidens, that the light of this sun, most holy Mary, would obscure them and cause them to be little noticed; that on her account their own negligences were more clearly apparent to the priests and their teacher; and that Mary alone was preferred in the estimation and judgment of all.

701. The companions of our Queen allowed the devil to sow this bad seed in their bosoms; for they were heedless and little experienced in spiritual ways. They allowed

it to increase until it grew into a sort of interior abhorrence of the most pure Mary, and this into anger. Filled with this anger, they began to look upon and treat Her with hatred, not being able to endure the modesty of that most innocent Dove. For the dragon had incited them and had already imbued the incautious girls with some of his own wrath. The temptation continuing, its effects became manifest and the temple maidens began to plot among themselves, ignorant of the spirit that moved them. They agreed among themselves to molest and persecute the unknown Princess of the world, until She should be forced to leave the temple. Accordingly they called Her aside and spoke to Her very sharp words, treating Her at the same time very haughtily. They called Her a hypocrite and reproached Her with scheming to obtain the favor of the priests and of their teacher, while seeking to discredit all the other girls by her complaints and her exaggerations of their faults, whereas She was the most useless of them all and therefore deserved their hatred as an enemy.

702. These contumelies and many other accusations the most prudent Virgin bore without disturbance and with equable humility. She answered: "My friends and my mistresses, you are right no doubt in saying, that I am the least and the most imperfect among you; but then you, my sisters, being better informed, must pardon me my faults and must teach me in my ignorance. Direct me therefore, that I may succeed in doing better and act according to your pleasure. I beseech you, my friends, not to deny me your good will, which, though I am so imperfect, I sincerely wish to merit; for I love you and reverence you as a servant, and I will obey you in all things, in which you desire to make a trial of my good will. Command me then, and tell me what you wish of me."

703. These humble and sweet reasonings of the most humble Mary did not soften the hardened hearts of her associates and companions, for they were infected by the poisonous fury of the dragon against Her. Precisely on account of her sweet humility he became so much the more infuriated, and thus turned this sweet antidote against the poisonous bite into a means of inflaming them with open wrath against Her who was the great sign in heaven (Apoc. 12, 15). For many days this persecution continued, during which the heavenly Lady sought in vain to appease the hate of her companions by her humility, patience, modesty and tolerance. On the contrary the demon was emboldened to inspire them with many thoughts full of temerity, urging them to lay violent hands on the most humble lamb and maltreat Her, even so far as to take away her life. But the Lord did not permit the execution of such sacrilegious suggestions; and the farthest which they were allowed to proceed, was to insult Her by words or to inflict some blows. This quarreling remained concealed from the teacher of the maidens and from the priests, and during this time most holy Mary gained incomparable merits in the sight of the Almighty, because She took occasion to exercise all the virtues, as well in regard to God as also in regard to the creatures, which were persecuting and hating Her. She performed heroic acts of charity and humility, yielding good for evil, blessings for curses, prayers for blasphemies (I Cor. 4, 13), fulfilling in all things the most perfect and the highest requirements of the divine law. Before the Lord She exercised the most exalted virtues, by praying for his creatures who were persecuting Her; and She excited the admiration of the angels, by humiliating Herself as if She were the vilest of mortals deservedly treated in that way. In all these things

She surpassed the conceptions of men and the highest merits of the seraphim.

704. It happened one day, that, impelled by the diabolical suggestions, these girls brought Mary to a retired room, where they could act with more safety. Here they began to heap unmeasured injuries and insults upon Her, in order to excite Her to weakness or anger and to entrap Her imperturbable modesty into some hasty action. But as the Queen of virtues could not even for a moment be subject to vice, She showed Herself immovable, and She answered them with great kindness and sweetness. Being enraged beyond bounds on account of not succeeding in their purpose, her companions raised their voices in discordant strife, so that they were heard in the temple and by such unwonted noise caused great astonishment and confusion. The priests and the teacher hastened to the place whence the noise proceeded, and the Lord permitted a new humiliation of his Spouse, for they asked with severity, what was the cause of this strife. While the most meek Dove remained silent, the other maidens angrily answered and said: "Mary of Nazareth brings us all into strife and quarreling by her horrid conduct: for in your absence, She irritates and provokes us in such a manner, that if She does not leave the temple, it will be impossible to keep any peace with Her. When we allow Her her own way, She becomes overbearing; if we reprehend Her, She makes fun of all of us by prostrating Herself at our feet with feigned humility, and afterwards She quarrels anew and throws all into uproar."

705. The priests and the instructress brought the Mistress of the world into another room, and there they severely reprehended Her, giving full credit at that time to all the accusations of her companions, and, having

exhorted Her to reform and behave as one living in the house of God, they threatened to expel Her from the temple, if She would not mend Her conduct. This threat was the most severe punishment, which they could have given Her, even if She had been guilty; so much the more severe was it, when She was altogether innocent of any of the faults imputed to Her. Whoever will obtain from the Lord some understanding of a part only of the profound humility of the most holy Mary will also understand somewhat of the effects of these mysteries in her most innocent heart; for She judged Herself to be the most vile of the womanborn, the most unworthy to live among them and to burden the earth with her presence. This threat cruelly lacerated the heart of the most prudent Virgin, and in tears She answered and said to the priests: "My masters, I acknowledge the favor, which you do me in correcting and teaching me, the most imperfect and despicable of creatures; but I beseech you, pardon me, you who are the servants of the Most High, and overlooking my defects, direct me in all things so that I may reform and from now on give pleasure to his Majesty and to my sisters and companions. With the grace of the Lord I will resolve this anew and will commence from today."

706. Our Queen added other words full of sweetest innocence and modesty; and therewith the instructress and the priests dismissed Her, enjoining anew upon Her that doctrine, of which She herself was the most wise Teacher. Immediately She betook Herself to her companions, and prostrating Herself at their feet, She asked them pardon, as if the faults, with which they had charged Her, could ever have been shared by the Mother of all innocence. They received Her this time with more good will, because they thought that her tears were the effect of the

punishment and the warning of the priests and the instructress, whom they had induced to act thus in pursuance of their badly governed passions. The dragon, who was secretly contriving this entanglement, urged the incautious hearts of all these girls to still greater haughtiness and presumption, and as they had now made headway in the estimation of the priests themselves, they proceeded to greater audacity in discrediting and lowering the good name of the most pure Virgin. Accordingly by instigation of the devil, they fabricated new accusations and lies; but the Most High never permitted them to say anything very grave and dishonorable of Her, whom He had chosen as the most holy Mother of his Onlybegotten. He merely allowed the indignation and deceit of the maidens to go so far as to exaggerate very much some small faults, which were even in themselves altogether fictitious, but which they accused Her of. Moreover they were permitted to practice many feminine intrigues, to which their own restlessness drove them. In these different ways and in the reprehensions of her instructress and of the priests our most humble Lady Mary found many occasions of exercising virtues, of increasing the gifts of the Most High, and of exalting Her merit.

707. In all this our Queen acted with the plenitude of perfection in the eyes of the Lord, who regaled Himself with the sweetest odor of that humble spikenard (Cant. 1, 18), maltreated and despised by the creatures, who did not know Her. She repeated and continued her clamors and her sighs on account of the absence of her Beloved; and on one of these occasions She said: "My highest Good and Lord of infinite mercies, if Thou who art my Lord and my Maker, hast forsaken me, it is not strange, that all the creatures abhor me and rise up against me. All this my ingratitude to thy benefits well

merits; nevertheless I will always acknowledge and confess Thee as my refuge and my treasure. Thou alone art my God, my Beloved and my rest: If then Thou art this to me, how can my afflicted heart come to rest? The creatures do only that with me, which they should; but they do not go so far in this as I merit, because Thou, O my Lord and Father, in punishing, art so sparing, and in rewarding art so generous. Discount, O Lord, my negligences by my sorrow of having lost thy interior presence, and pay back with a liberal hand the benefits, blessings, which thy creatures gain for me in forcing me to acknowledge thy goodness and my meanness. Raise, O Lord, the needy one from the dust of the earth (I Reg. 2, 8) and renew her, who is poor and the most abject of the creatures, and then may I see thy divine face and be saved." (Psalm 79, 5).

708. It would not be possible, nor is it necessary, to relate all that happened to our Queen in this test of her virtues. But leaving Her at present therein, and considering Her behavior, we will have in Her a living example, teaching us to bear with exultation all the troubles, pains and strifes, which are so necessary in order to satisfy for our sins and subject our necks to the yoke of mortification. There was no sin nor any deceit in our most innocent Dove, yet, in humble silence and patience, She suffered ungrounded hate and persecution. Let us then be confounded in her presence, that we should deem slight injuries irreparable offenses which must be avenged; whereas all offenses, of whatever kind, are to be held but slight by those, who have God for their enemy. The Most High was mighty to preserve Her from all persecution, but then He could not have shown his power in leading Her out of it unharmed, nor would He have given Her such dear pledges of his love, nor would She

have reaped the sweet fruit of loving her enemies and her persecutors. We make ourselves unworthy of such great blessing in raising an outcry against creatures whenever we are injured and our proud heart rises up against God himself, who arranges all things; for it refuses to subject itself to its Creator and Justifier, who knows what is necessary for our salvation.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST BLESSED MARY.

709. Take notice then, my Daughter, that the example of these events of my life should serve thee for thy instruction and direction. Treasure up this example lovingly in thy bosom and allow it to dilate thy heart, so as to receive with joy the persecutions and calumnies of creatures, whenever thou art made partaker of such happiness. The sons of perdition, who serve vanity, are ignorant of the treasure of suffering injuries and of pardoning them, and they make a boast of vengeance, which even according to the requirements of the natural reason is reprehensible and arises from a heart brutal and beastly, rather than from a human. On the other hand, he who pardons injuries magnanimously and forgets them, although he may not have divine faith nor the light of the Gospel, becomes noble and excellent, and does not pay vile tribute to the fierce and irrational brutality of revenge.

710. And if the vice of revenge is so contrary even to the dictates of nature, consider, my daughter, how much it is opposed to grace and how hateful and abominable the vengeful are in the eyes of my most holy Son, who made Himself man, suffered and died for no other purpose than to forgive and to obtain the pardon of the Almighty for the injuries committed by the human race.

Against this tendency of his whole life and against his whole nature and infinite bounty, vengeance is arrayed; as far as in him lies, the vindictive man destroys entirely, as well God himself as all his works. And for this attempt he well merits, that God should destroy him with all his might. Between the person who pardons and suffers injuries, and the vindictive, there is the same difference as between the one and only heir and the deadly enemy; this one provokes all the wrath of God and the other merits and obtains all blessings; because in this virtue he exhibits a most perfect image of the celestial Father.

711. I wish thee, O soul, to understand, that to suffer injuries with equanimity and to pardon them entirely for the Lord, will be more acceptable in his eyes, than if thou choose of thy own will to do the most severe penance and shed thy own blood for Him. Humble thyself before those who persecute thee, love them and pray for them from thy true heart; thereby shalt thou turn toward thee in love the heart of thy God and rise to the perfection of holiness, and thou shalt overcome hell in all things. That great dragon, who persecutes all men, was confounded many times by my humility and meekness, and his fury could not tolerate the sight of these virtues. From them he fled more swiftly than the sun's rays. I gained great victories for my soul and won glorious triumphs for the exaltation of the Divinity. When any creature rose up against me, I conceived no anger toward it, for I knew in reality it was an instrument of the Most High, directed by his Providence for my special good. This knowledge and the consideration, that it was a creature of my Lord, capable of grace, excited me to love it truly with a greater fervor, and I did not rest until I could reward this benefit of persecution by obtaining for it eternal life, as far as was possible.

712. Strive after, therefore, and labor for the imitation of that, which thou hast understood and written; show thyself most meek, peaceful and agreeable toward those, who molest thee; esteem them truly in thy heart, and do not take vengeance of thy Lord by taking vengeance on his instruments, nor despise the inestimable jewel of injuries. As far as lies in thee always give good for evil, (Rom. 12, 14) benefits for injuries, love for hate, praise for blame, blessings for malediction. Then wilt thou be a perfect daughter of thy Father (Matth. 5, 43), the beloved spouse of thy Lord, my friend and my most cherished daughter.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MOST HIGH ENLIGHTENS THE PRIEST CONCERNING THE SPOTLESS INNOCENCE OF MOST HOLY MARY; SHE HERSELF IS INFORMED OF THE APPROACHING DEATH OF HER MOTHER, SAINT ANNE, AND IS PRESENT AT THIS EVENT.

713. The Lord did not sleep, nor did He slumber (Psalm 120, 4) during the clamors of his beloved spouse Mary, although He pretended not to hear them, delighting in the prolonged exercise of her sufferings, which occasioned so many glorious triumphs and the admirations and praises of the supernal spirits. The smouldering fire of the persecution already mentioned continued unabated, in order that the Phenix, Mary, might many times renew Herself from the ashes of her humility, and in order that her most pure heart be regenerated over and over again to new estates and conditions of divine grace. But when the opportune time arrived for putting an end to the blind envy and jealousy of those ensnared maidens, and in order that their petulance might not altogether discredit Her who was to be the excellence of nature and grace itself, the Lord spoke to the priest in his sleep and said to Him: "My servant Mary is pleasing in my eyes, and She is my perfect and my chosen One: She is entirely innocent of anything of which She is accused." The same revelation was given to Anne, the instructress of the maidens. That morning the priest and the instructress conferred with each other about the message, which both had received. Being

now certain, they repented of the deceit, into which they had been led, and called the Princess Mary, asking her pardon for having given credit to the false report of the girls and offering Her all the reparation necessary to defend Her from the persecution and the sufferings consequent upon it.

714. She that was the Mother and origin of humility, after listening to their words, answered the priest and the instructress: "My superiors, I am the one that deserves your reprehensions and I beseech you do not hold me unworthy of undergoing them, since I ask for them as most necessary to me. The intercourse with my sisters, the other maidens, is most highly prized by me, and I do not wish to be deprived of it through my fault, since I owe them so much for having borne with me; and as a return for that benefit, I desire to serve them more faithfully; nevertheless if you command me anything else, I stand prepared to obey your will." This answer of the most holy Mary still more comforted and consoled the priest and the instructress; and they approved of her humble petition, but from that time on they attended to Her and observed Her with new reverence and affection. The most humble Maiden begged to kiss the hand of the priest and of the matron, asking for their blessing according to her custom; with this they dismissed Her. Just as the parched desire of the thirsty for drink is increased at the sight of clear water withdrawn beyond their reach, so was the heart of Mary our Mistress filled with yearning regret for the exercise of suffering. Thirsting and burning for the divine love She feared lest through the watchful care of the priest and of the instructress, She should from thenceforward be deprived of the treasure of affliction.

715. Seeking solitude and speaking with God alone,

She addressed Him: "Why, O Lord and most beloved Master, such severity with me? Why such a long absence and such a forgetfulness of her, who cannot live without Thee? And if in the protracted solitude and separation from thy sweet and loving presence, I was consoled by the pledges of thy affection, given to me in the afflictions and sufferings for thy sake, how shall I be able to live now in my dereliction without this solace? Why, O Lord, dost Thou so soon withdraw thy beneficent hand from me in refusing me this favor? Who besides thyself could have changed the sentiments of the priests and of the instructress? But I do not merit the benefit of their charitable reprehensions, nor am I worthy to bear affliction; for I am equally unworthy of thy most loving visit and delightful presence. If I have not been able to please Thee, my Father and Lord, I will make amends for my negligence. There can be no relief from the depression of my spirit as long as the joy of thy presence is wanting to my soul. But I continue to hope that thy divine pleasure, O my Spouse, be fulfilled in all things."

716. The enlightenment of the priests and the instructress concerning Mary abated the persecutions of the maidens. The Lord also restrained them and prevented the demon from inciting them thereafter. But the time, during which He absented Himself and during which He hid Himself from this heavenly spouse, lasted (wonderful to relate!) ten years; although the Most High interrupted this absence a few times by allowing the veil to fall from his face for the relief of his Beloved; but it was not often that He dispensed this favor during that time, and He did it with less lavishness and tenderness than in the first years of her childhood. This absence of the Lord was ordained for our Queen in order

that She might, by actual exercise of all perfection, be made worthy for the dignity to which She was destined by the Most High. For if She had continually enjoyed the vision of his Majesty in the manner described by us in the fourteenth chapter of this book, She could not have suffered according to the common order of a mere creature.

717. But during this retirement and absence of the Lord, although most holy Mary missed the intuitive and abstractive visions of the divine Essence and of the angels as mentioned above, her most holy soul and her faculties enjoyed more gifts of grace and more supernatural enlightenment, than all the saints ever attained or received. For in regard to this the hand of God never withdrew from Her. But in comparison with the frequent visitations of the Lord in her first years, I call the state of her privation of his presence for such a long time, an absence and withdrawal of the Lord. It commenced eight days before the death of her father, saint Joachim, and afterwards the persecution of hell began, followed by the persecutions on the part of creatures. They lasted until our Princess reached the age of twelve years. Having passed this age, the holy angels on a certain day, without manifesting themselves, spoke to Her as follows: "Mary, the end of the life of thy holy mother Anne as ordained by the Most High, is now about to arrive, and his Majesty has resolved to free her from the prison of her mortal body and bring her labors to a happy fulfillment."

718. At this unexpected and sorrowful message the heart of the affectionate Daughter was filled with compassion. Prostrating Herself in the presence of the Most High, She poured forth a fervent prayer for the happy death of her mother saint Anne in the following words:

"King of the ages, invisible and eternal Lord, immortal and almighty Creator of the Universe, although I am but dust and ashes and although I must confess, that I am in debt to thy greatness, I will not on that account be prevented from speaking to my Lord (Gen. 18, 17), and I pour out before thee my heart, hoping, O my God, that Thou wilt not despise her, who has always confessed thy holy name. Dismiss, O Lord, in peace thy servant, who has with invincible faith and confidence desired to fulfill thy divine pleasure. Let her issue victoriously and triumphantly from the hostile combat and enter the portal of thy holy chosen ones; let thy powerful arm strengthen her; at the close of her mortal career, let that same right hand, which has helped her to walk in the path of perfection, assist her, and let her enter, O my Father, into the peace of thy friendship and grace, since she has always sought after it with an upright heart."

719. The Lord did not respond expressly in words to this petition of his Beloved; but his answer was a marvelous favor, shown to Her and to her mother, saint Anne. During that night his Majesty commanded the guardian angels of the most holy Mary to carry Her bodily to the sickbed of her mother and one of them to remain in her stead, assuming for this purpose an aerial body as a substitute for hers. The holy angels obeyed the mandate of God and they carried their and our Queen to the house and to the room of her holy mother Anne. Being thus brought to the presence of her mother, the heavenly Lady kissed her hand and said to her: "My mother and mistress, may the Most High be thy light and thy strength, and may He be blessed, since He has in his condescension not permitted me in my necessity to remain without the benefit of thy last blessing; may I then receive it, my mother, from thy hand." Holy Anne

gave her last blessing to Mary and with overflowing heart also thanked the Lord for the great favor thus conferred upon Herself. For She knew the sacrament of her Daughter and Queen, and she did not forget to express her gratitude for the love, which Mary had shown her on this occasion.

720. Then our Princess turned toward her mother and comforted her against the approach of death; and among many other words of incomparable consolation, She spoke also the following: "Mother, beloved of my soul, it is necessary that we pass through the portal of death to the eternal life, which we expect; bitter and painful is the passage, but also profitable. For it is instituted by the divine Goodness as the beginning of our security and rest; it satisfies by itself for the negligences and shortcomings of the creature in fulfilling the duties. Accept death, O my mother; through it pay the common debt with joy of spirit, and depart in confidence to the company of the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, the just and the friends of God, who were our ancestors. There await with them the beatitude, which the Most High will send to us through our Savior and his Redemption. The certainty of this hope will be thy consolation until we attain to the full possession of that which we expect."

721. Saint Anne answered her Daughter with a return of love and in a spirit of joy worthy of herself and of such a Daughter on such an occasion. In maternal tenderness she said: "Mary, my beloved Daughter, fulfill now thy obligation by not forgetting me in the presence of our Lord God and Creator and reminding Him of the need I have of his protection in this hour. Remember what thou owest to her, who has conceived Thee and bore Thee in her womb nine months, who afterwards nourished Thee at her breast and has always held

Thee in her heart. Beseech the Lord, my Daughter, that He extend a hand of mercy toward me, his useless creature, who has her beginning only through his mercies, and that I may receive his blessing in this hour of my death; for I place my confidence and have always placed it altogether in his holy name. Do not leave me, my Beloved, before Thou hast closed my eyes. Thou wilt be left an orphan and without the protection of man; but thou wilt live under the guardianship of the Most High; confide in the mercies which He has shown of old. Daughter of my heart, walk in the path of the justifications of the Lord and ask his Majesty to govern thy aspirations and thy powers and to be thy Teacher in the holy law. Do not leave the temple before choosing thy state of life, and let it be done only with the sound advice of the priests of the temple, and continue to pray to the Lord that He dispose of thy affairs according to his own pleasure. Pray that, if it be his will to give Thee a spouse, he may be of the tribe of Juda and of the race of David. The possessions of thy father Joachim and of myself, which shall belong to Thee, share with the poor, with whom thou shouldst deal in loving generosity. Keep thy secret hidden within thy Bosom and ask the Omnipotent without ceasing to show his mercy by sending his salvation and redemption through his promised Messiah. Ask and beseech his infinite bounty to be thy protection, and may his blessing come over Thee together with mine."

722. In the midst of such exalted and heavenly colloquies the blessed mother saint Anne felt the throes of death approaching and, reclining upon the throne of grace, that is, in the arms of her most holy Daughter Mary, she rendered her most pure soul to her Creator. Having closed the eyes of her mother, as saint Anne had requested, and leaving the sacred body in position

for burial, the Queen Mary was again taken up by the holy angels and restored to her place in the temple. The Most High did not impede the force of her filial love, which naturally would cause a great and tender sorrow at the death of her mother and a sense of loneliness at being deprived of her assistance. But these sorrows were most holy and perfect in our Queen, governed by the graces of her most prudent innocence and purity. In the midst of them She gave praise to the Most High for the infinite mercies, which He had shown to her mother both in life and in death, while her sweet and loving complaints on account of the absence of the Lord continued unabated.

723. However this most holy Daughter could not know the full extent of the consolation afforded her mother in having Her present at her death. For the Daughter was not aware of her own exalted dignity and the sacrament connected with Her, as was known to the mother. This she had always kept secret, as the Most High had commanded her. But finding at her bedside Her, who was the light of her eyes and of the whole world, and having the privilege of expiring in her arms, all the desires of her mortal life were fulfilled, making its end more happy than that of all the mortals up to that hour. She died, not so much in the fullness of years as in the fullness of merits, and her most holy soul was placed by the angels in the bosom of Abraham, where she was recognized and reverenced by all the Patriarchs, Prophets and the just, who were in that place. This most holy matron was naturally endowed with a great and generous heart, with a clear and aspiring intellect fervent and at the same time full of tranquillity and peace. She was of medium stature, somewhat smaller than her Daughter, most holy Mary; her face was rather round, of a suffused whiteness, her countenance was always

equable and composed, and finally She was the mother of Her, who was to be the Mother of God himself; this dignity in itself included many perfections. Saint Anne lived fifty-six years, portioned off into the following periods; at the age of twenty-four she espoused saint Joachim and she remained without issue for twenty years; then in the forty-fourth year she gave birth to the most holy Mary, and of the twelve years which she lived during the lifetime of Mary, three were passed in her company and nine during her absence in the temple, which altogether make fifty-six years.

724. Concerning this great and admirable woman, as I have been informed, some grave authors assert, that saint Anne was married three times and that in each one of these marriages she was the mother of one of the three Marys; others have the contrary opinion. The Lord has vouchsafed to me, solely on account of his goodness, great enlightenment concerning the life of this fortunate saint; yet never was it intimated to me that she was ever married except to saint Joachim, or that she ever had any other daughter besides Mary, the Mother of Christ. Perhaps because it does not pertain to nor was necessary for the history which I am writing, information was not given to me whether the other Marys who are called her sisters, were or were not her cousins, that is daughters of the sister of saint Anne. When her spouse saint Joachim died, she was in the forty-eighth year of her age, and the Most High selected and set her apart from the race of women, in order to make her the mother of Her, who was the Superior of all creatures, inferior only to God, and yet his Mother. Because of her having such a Daughter and of her being the grandmother of the Word made man, all the nations may call the most fortunate saint Anne blessed.

INSTRUCTION BY THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

725. My daughter, the most valuable science of man is to know how to resign himself entirely into the hands of his Creator, since He knows why he has formed him and for what end each man is destined. Man's sole duty is to live in obedience and in the love of his Lord. God will charge himself most solicitously with the care of those that thus confide in Him; He will take upon Himself the management of all the affairs and all the events of this life in order to draw blessings and benefits for those that thus trust in his fidelity. He afflicts and corrects the just by adversities, He consoles and rejoices them with his favors, He inspires them with hope in his promises, and threatens them and inspires them with fear by his threats; He absents Himself in order to attract their love, He shows Himself to the souls in order to reward and preserve them in fervor, and in all these things He makes the lives of the chosen ones more delightful and beautiful. All this happened to me in that which thou hast written of me; He visited me and prepared me in his mercy with many different kinds of blessings, difficulties and labors, persecutions of creatures, and the separation from my parents and from all men.

726. In the midst of these various trials the Lord did not forget my weakness, for with the sorrow for the death of my mother, holy Anne, He combined the consolation and comfort of permitting me to be present at her death. O my soul, how many blessings do men lose by not attaining to this wisdom! They hold themselves aloof from the divine Providence, which is powerful and sweet and unfailing, which measures the orbs of heaven and the elements; which counts the footsteps, discerns the thoughts, and disposes everything for the benefit of

the creatures. Instead of all this men are given over to their own solicitudes, which are inefficient and weak, blind, uncertain and inconsiderate. From this false beginning originate and follow irreparable evils for man; for he deprives himself of the divine protection and falls from the dignity of having his Creator as his Helper and Defender. What is still worse, if by his carnal wisdom and by diabolical astuteness to which man resigns himself, he succeeds sometimes in obtaining what he seeks, he deems himself fortunate on account of this, his own misfortune! And with sensible pleasure he imbibes the poison of eternal death in the deceitful delight, which he has gained, while incurring the alienation and abhorrence of his God.

727. Mind well, then, my daughter, this danger, and let thy whole solicitude be to cast thyself securely into the arms of thy provident God and Lord. He being infinite in wisdom and power, loves thee much more than thou lovest thyself, and He knows and desires for thee greater goods, than thou ever canst learn to desire and request. Confide in his goodness and in his promises, which do not admit of failure; remember what He says through his Prophet to the just: that it is well with man (Is. 3, 10) since God takes upon Himself his desires and cares, and charges Himself with them in order to deal with them according to his generosity. By means of this most secure confidence thou wilt even in this mortal life enjoy the blessedness of a tranquil and peaceful conscience; and although thou mayest find thyself surrounded by the tempestuous waves of trial and adversity which cast over thee the sorrows of death (Psalm 17, 5), and although the terrors of hell may surround Thee, suffer thou and hope in patience, so that thou err not from the portal of the grace and the good will of the Most High.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MOST HIGH MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO HIS BELOVED MARY, OUR PRINCESS, BY CONFERRING ON HER AN EXTRAORDINARY FAVOR.

728. Already our heavenly Princess felt that the day of the clear vision of the Divinity was approaching and that like the harbingers of early dawn, the rays of the divine light were breaking upon her soul. Her heart began to be inflamed by the nearness of the invisible fire, which illumines but does not consume; and made attentive by this new clearness, She questioned her angels and said to them: "My friends and lords, my most faithful and vigilant sentinels, tell me: what hour is it of my night? And when will the bright light of the day arise, in which my eyes shall see the Sun of justice which illumines them and gives life to my affections and my soul?" The holy princes answered Her and said: "Spouse of the Most High, thy wished-for light and truth is near; it will not tarry long, for already it approaches." At these words the veil which hid the view of these spiritual substances was slightly lifted; and the holy angels became visible, showing themselves as during her first years in their own essence, without hindrance or dependence of the bodily senses.

729. With these hopes and with the vision of the heavenly spirits the anxieties of most holy Mary concerning the sight of her Beloved were somewhat allayed. But this kind of love seeks after the most noble Object, and without It, although enjoying the presence of the angels

and saints, the heart, wounded by the arrows of the Omnipotent, will not come to rest. Nevertheless, our heavenly Princess, rejoiced by this alleviation, spoke to her angels and said to them: "Sovereign Princess and flames of that inaccessible light, in which my Beloved dwells, why have I for so long a time been unworthy of your sight? Wherein have I been displeasing to you and failed to satisfy you? Tell me, my lords and teachers, wherein I have been negligent, in order that I may not again be forsaken by you through my own fault." "O Lady and Spouse of the Almighty," they answered, "we obey the voice of our Creator and are governed by his holy will, and as his spirits, He commissions us and sends us out in his service. He commanded us to conceal ourselves during the time in which He himself withdrew from sight. But though hidden we remained present, solicitous for thy protection and defense, fulfilling his command by remaining in thy company without being visible."

730. "Tell me then, where is my Lord at the present time, my highest God, my Maker. Tell me, whether my eyes shall see Him soon, or whether perhaps I have displeased Him, in order that I may, as a most insignificant creature, bitterly bewail the cause of this punishment. Ministers and ambassadors of the highest King, be moved by my afflicted love and give me tokens of my Beloved." "Soon, O Lady," they answered, "Thou shalt see Him whom thy soul desires, let thy sweet sorrows turn to hope; our God will not withhold Himself from those that seek Him so truly; great, O Mistress, is his loving Goodness with all those that cling to Him and He will not be niggardly in satisfying thy wishes." The holy angels openly called Her Mistress, as they were sure of her most prudent humility and as they could conceal

the full meaning of this title under pretense of her position as Spouse of the Most High; for She knew that they had been eye-witnesses of the espousal, which his Majesty had celebrated with their Queen. And as his wisdom had ordered, that in all else, except in the title and dignity of Mother of the Word, which was to remain concealed to Her until the proper time, the holy angels were to show Her great reverence; so they were solicitous to give Her many tokens of respect, although they covertly honored Her much more for what they knew in secret, than for that which they manifested to Her openly.

731. During these conferences and loving colloquies the heavenly Princess awaited the approach of her Spouse and her highest delight, while the seraphim, who attended Her, commenced to prepare Her by new enlightenment of her faculties; a sure pledge of the beginning of the Good for which She hoped. But as these favors augmented the fire of her love without allowing Her as yet to reach the desired end, they only augmented the heartrending anguish of her love, and with sighs She spoke to the seraphim, saying: "Most exalted spirits, who stand close to my highest Good, ye clear mirrors, whence reflected I was wont to see Him in the joy of my soul, tell me, where is the light which illuminates you and fills you with beauty? Tell me, why does my Beloved tarry so long? Tell me, what hides Him, and why my eyes cannot see Him? If it is through my fault, I will amend my ways; if I do not merit the fulfillment of my wishes, I will conform myself to his will; and if He seeks his pleasure in my sorrow, I will suffer in the joy of my heart; but tell me, how can I live without having my own life? How shall I direct myself without light?"

732. To her sweet complaints the holy seraphim answered: "Lady, thy Beloved is not absent when for thy good He tarries and withholds Himself; in order to console his beloved, He afflicts them, in order to give so much the more joy, He aggrieves them, in order to be sought after, He withdraws from them. He wishes that Thou sow in tears (Psalm 125, 5), and so gather afterwards the sweet fruits of sorrow. If the Beloved did not hide Himself, He would not be sought after with that anxiety which is caused by his absence, nor would the soul renew its affections, nor increase in the appreciation due to that Treasure."

733. They transmitted to Her that light, of which I have spoken (No. 625), in order to purify her faculties; not because there were any defects to be remedied, for She could not be guilty of any defects. On the contrary all her actions and operations during the absence of the Lord had been meritorious and holy. Nevertheless it was necessary that She be endowed with new gifts, in order to tranquilize her spirit and her faculties, which had been moved by affectionate labors and anxieties during the absence of the Lord, and also in order to withdraw Her from her present state and raise Her to a position, where She could enjoy new and different favors, for in order that her faculties might again be proportioned to the high Object and to the manner of enjoying It, they must necessarily be renewed and redisposed. All this the holy seraphim proceeded to do with Her in the manner already described in book second, chapter fourteenth. When the Lord conferred upon Her the final adornment and the quality necessary for the immediate vision about to take place.

734. As far as I can explain, this successive elevation of the faculties of the heavenly Queen engendered those

particular affections and sentiments of love and virtues which the Lord desired, and in the midst of these elevations his Majesty withdrew the veil. Then after his long concealment He manifested Himself to his only Spouse, his beloved and most holy Mary, by an abstractive vision of the Divinity. Although this vision was given through abstractive images and not intuitive, yet it was most clear and exalted in its kind. By it the Lord dried the continual tears of our Queen, rewarded her affection and her loving anxiety, satisfied all her desires and overwhelmed Her with delight as She reclined in the arms of her Beloved (Cant. 8, 5). Then was renewed the youth of that aspiring Eagle, winging its flight into the impenetrable regions of the Divinity (Psalm 102, 5), and by the after-effects of this vision She ascended whither no other creature can ascend, or no other intellect can reach outside of God's.

735. The joy which filled the most pure Mistress on the occasion of this vision must be measured as well by the extreme sorrow through which She had passed as by the accumulation of merits which She had gained. I can only say that, in so far and by how much sorrow had abounded, so also now overflowed her joy; and that her patience, her humility, her fortitude, her constancy, her loving anxieties were the most remarkable and the most exquisite that ever until that time or ever after could have existed or can exist in any creature. This most unparalleled Lady alone could understand the excellence of that wisdom and could appreciate the greatness of the loss sustained in being deprived of the vision of God and in being far from his presence. She alone having suffered and measured this great loss in humility, and with fortitude, to make it conducive to her sanctification by ineffable love, and afterwards to appreciate the blessings and the joy of its recovery.

736. Being then elevated to this vision and having prostrated Herself in the divine presence, the most holy Mary said to his Majesty: "Lord and most high God, incomprehensible and highest Good of my soul, since Thou raisest up such a poor and worthless worm as myself, receive, O Lord, in humble thankfulness of my soul, the homage due from me to thy goodness and glory, together with that which thy courtiers render unto Thee; and if any of the service which came from me, so low and earthly a creature, has displeased Thee, reform that, which in my works has been unsatisfactory to Thee, my Lord. O Goodness and Wisdom incomparable and infinite, purify my heart and renew it, in order that it may be pleasing, humble, penitent and acceptable in thy sight. If I have not borne the insignificant troubles and the death of my parents as I should, and if I have in anything erred from that which is pleasing to Thee, perfect my faculties and all my works, O most high God, as my powerful Lord, as my Father. and as the only Spouse of my soul."

737. To this humble prayer the Most High answered: "My Spouse and my Dove, the grief for the death of thy parents and the sorrow occasioned by the other troubles is the natural effect of human nature and no fault; and by the love with which Thou has conformed Thyself to the dispositions of my Providence in all things, Thou hast merited anew my graces and my blessings, I am the One that distributes the true light and its effects by my wisdom; I am the Lord of all, that calls forth the day and the night in succession; I cause tranquillity and I set bounds to the storms, in order that my power and my glory may be exalted and in order that through them the soul might steer more securely with the ballast of experience and hasten more expedi-

tiously through the violent waves of tribulation, arriving at the secure harbor of my friendship and grace, and obliging Me by the fullness of merit to receive it with so much the greater favor. This, my Beloved, is the admirable course of my wisdom and for this reason I concealed Myself during all that time from thy sight; for from Thee I seek whatever is most holy and most perfect. Serve Me then, my beautiful One, who am thy Spouse, thy God of infinite mercy and whose name is admirable in the diversity and variety of my great works."

738. Our Princess issued from this vision altogether renovated and made godlike; full of the new science of the Divinity and of the hidden sacraments of the King, confessing Him, adoring Him, and praising Him with incessant canticles and by the flights of her pacified and tranquilized spirit. In like proportion also was the increase of her humility and of all the other virtues. Her most ardent prayer was to penetrate more and more deeply into that which is most perfect and most pleasing to the will of the Most High, and to fulfill and execute it in her actions. Thus passed a number of days, until that happened, which is to be related in the next chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, OUR MISTRESS.

739. My daughter, many times I shall repeat to thee the lesson containing the greatest wisdom for souls, which consists in the knowledge of the cross, in the love of sufferings, and in putting this knowledge into practice by bearing afflictions with patience. If the condition of mortals were not so low, they would covet sufferings merely for the sake of their God and Lord,

who has proclaimed them to be according to his will and pleasure; for the faithful and loving servant should always prefer the likings of his lord to his own convenience. But the worldlings in their torpidity are moved neither by the duty of conforming to their Father and Lord, nor by his declaration that all their salvation consists in following Christ in his sufferings and that his sinful children must reap the fruit of the Redemption by imitation of their sinless Chief.

740. Accept then, my dearest, this doctrine and engrave it deeply into thy heart. Understand that as a daughter of the Most High, as a spouse of my Son, and as my disciple, even if from no other motive, thou must acquire the precious gem of suffering and thus become pleasing to thy Lord and Spouse. I exhort thee, my daughter, to select the sufferings of his Cross in preference to his favors and gifts and rather embrace afflictions than desire to be visited with caresses; for in choosing favors and delights thou mayest be moved by selflove, but in accepting tribulations and sorrows, thou canst be moved only by the love of Christ. And if preference is to be given to sufferings rather than to delights, wherever it can be done without sin, what foolishness is it, when men pursue so blindly the deceitful and vile delights of the senses, and when they abhor so much all that pertains to suffering for Christ and for the good of their soul?

741. Thy incessant prayer, my daughter, should be always to repeat: here I am, Lord, what wilt Thou do with me? Prepared is my heart, I am ready and not disturbed; what dost Thou wish me to do for Thee? These sentiments should fill thy heart in their full and true import, repeating them more by sincere and ardent affection, than by word of mouth. Let thy thoughts be

exalted, thy intentions most upright, pure and noble, desiring to fulfill in all things the greater pleasure of the Lord, who with measure and weight dispenses both sufferings and the favors of his graces. Examine and search within thyself without ceasing, by what sentiments, by what actions, and in what occasion thou mayest guard against offense and in what thou canst please thy Beloved most perfectly, and thus learn what thou must strive to correct or what thou must aspire to within thyself. Every disorder, be it yet so small, and all that may be less pure and perfect, see thou curtail and expunge immediately, even though it seem allowable or even of some profit; all that is not most pleasing to the Lord, thou must consider as evil, or as useless for thyself; and no imperfection must appear small to thee, if it is displeasing to God. With this anxious fear and holy solicitude thou shalt walk securely; and be certain, my dearest daughter, that it cannot enter into the mind of man, what copious reward the most high Lord reserves for those souls that live in this kind of attention and solicitude.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MOST HIGH COMMANDS THE MOST HOLY MARY TO ENTER THE STATE OF MATRIMONY AND HER RESPONSE TO THIS COMMAND.

742. At the age of thirteen and a half years, having grown considerably for her age, our most charming Princess, most pure Mary, had another abstractive vision of the Divinity of the same order and kind as those already described. In this vision, we might say, happened something similar to that which the holy Scriptures relate of Abraham, when God commanded him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, the only pledge of all his hopes. God tempted Abraham, says Moses (Gen. 12, 2), trying and probing the promptness of his obedience in order to reward it. We can say the same thing of our great Lady, that God tried Her in this vision, by commanding Her to enter the state of matrimony. Thence we can also understand the truth of the words: How inscrutable are the judgments of the Lord and how exalted are his ways and thoughts above our own (Rom. 11, 33)! As distant as heaven is from earth, were the thoughts of most holy Mary from the plans which the Most High now made known to Her, by commanding Her to accept a husband for her protection and company; for as far as depended upon her will She had desired and resolved during all her life not to have a husband (433, 586) and She had often repeated and renewed the vow of chastity, which She had taken at such a premature age.

743. As already mentioned, the Lord had celebrated his solemn espousal with the Princess Mary (435) when She was brought to the temple, confirming and approving her vow of chastity, and solemnizing it by the presence of the glorious hosts of angels. The most innocent Dove had withdrawn Herself from all human intercourse, relinquishing entirely all that might be called worldly interest and attention, or love and desire of creatures. She was altogether taken up and transformed by the pure and chaste love of that highest Good which never fails, knowing that She would be only more chaste in its love, more pure in its contact, and more virginal in its acceptance. When therefore, without any other explanation, the command of the Lord reached Her, that She now accept an earthly spouse and husband, what surprise and astonishment was it to this heavenly Maid, who, in her fixed confidence was living so secure in the possession of God himself as her Spouse and who now heard from Him such a command? Greater was this trial than that of Abraham (Gen. 22, 1, etc.), for he did not love Isaac in the same degree as most holy Mary loved inviolate chastity.

744. Nevertheless at this unexpected command the most prudent Virgin suspended her judgment, and preserved the calmness of her hope and belief more perfectly than Abraham. Hoping against hope (Rom. 4, 18), She made answer to the Lord saying: "Eternal God and incomprehensible Majesty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things contained therein, Thou, O Lord, who weighest the winds (Job 28, 25), and by thy commands settest bounds to the sea and subjectest all creation to thy will, canst dispose of me, thy worthless wormlet, according to thy pleasure, without making me fail in that which I have promised to Thee; and

if it be not displeasing to Thee, my good Lord, I confirm and ratify anew my desire to remain chaste during all my life and to have Thee for my Lord and Spouse; and since my only duty as a creature is to obey Thee, see Thou to it, my Spouse, that according to thy Providence I may escape from this predicament in which thy holy love places me." There was, however, some uneasiness in the most chaste maiden Mary, as far as her inferior nature was concerned, just as happened afterwards at the message of the archangel Gabriel (Luke 1, 8); yet, though She felt some sadness, it did not hinder Her from practicing the most heroic obedience which until then had fallen to her lot, and She resigned Herself entirely into the hand of the Lord. His Majesty answered her: "Mary, let not thy heart be disturbed, for thy resignation is acceptable to Me and my powerful arm is not subject to laws; by my disposition that will happen, which is most proper for Thee."

745. Consoled only by this vague promise of the Lord, most holy Mary recovered from her vision and returned to her ordinary state. Left between doubt and hope by the divine command and promise, She was full of solicitude, for the Lord intended that She should multiply Her tearful sentiments of love and confidence, of faith, humility, of obedience, of purest chastity and of other virtues, impossible to enumerate. In the meantime, while our great Lady applied Herself to vigilant prayer, and to her resigned and prudent sighs and solicitude, God spoke in sleep to the high priest, saint Simeon, and commanded him to arrange for the marriage of Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anne of Nazareth; since He regarded Her with special care and love. The holy priest answered, asking what was his will in regard to the person, whom the maiden Mary

was to marry and to whom She was to give Herself as Spouse. The Lord instructed Him to call together the other priests and learned persons and to tell them that this Maiden was left alone and an orphan and that She did not desire to be married; but that, as it was a custom for the firstborn maidens not to leave the temple without being provided for, it was proper She should be married to whomever it seemed good to them.

746. The highpriest obeyed the divine order and, having called together the other priests, he made known to them the will of the Most High, informing them of the favor in which his Majesty held this Maiden, Mary of Nazareth, according as it had been revealed to him. He told them that as She was an inmate of the temple and was now without parents, it was their duty to provide for Her and find a husband worthy of a Maiden so modest, virtuous and of such unimpeachable conduct as was hers in the temple. Moreover, as Mary was of noble lineage and as her property and other considerations made this marriage particularly important, it was necessary to consider well to whom She was to be entrusted. He added also that Mary of Nazareth did not desire to be married; but that at the same time it would not be proper to dismiss Her from the temple unmarried, since She was an orphan and a firstborn daughter.

747. Having conferred about this matter among themselves the priests and learned men, moved by divine impulse, concluded that, in a matter where so much was involved and where the Lord himself had favorably interfered, it would be best to inquire farther into his holy will and to ask Him to designate in some manner who should be the most appropriate person to be the spouse of Mary. Knowing that her spouse must be of the house and of the race of David in order to comply

with the law, they appointed a day, on which all the free and unmarried men of that race, who then might be in Jerusalem, were to be called together in the temple. It happened to be the very day on which our Princess completed her fourteenth year. As it was necessary to notify Her of the result of their conference and to ask Her consent, the highpriest Simeon called Her and informed her of their intention to give Her a spouse before dismissing Her from the temple.

748. The most prudent Virgin, with a countenance betokening virginal modesty, answered the priest with great composure and humility: "Sir, as far as my inclinations are concerned, I desire to preserve perpetual chastity during all my life; for I wished to dedicate myself to God in the service of this holy temple in return for the great blessings which I have received in it; I never had the intention or the desire to enter the state of matrimony, since I consider myself incapable of fulfilling the duties connected with it. This was my inclination, but thou, my master, who art to me in place of God, wilt teach me what is according to his holy Will." "My Daughter," answered the priest, "thy holy desires are acceptable to the Lord; but remember, that no maiden of Israel abstains from marriage as long as we expect the coming of the Messias conformably to the divine prophecies. Therefore all who obtain issue of children among our people, esteem themselves happy and blessed. In the matrimonial state Thou canst serve God truly and in great perfection; and in order that Thou mayest obtain a companion according to the heart of God and who will be conformable to thy wishes, we will pray to the Lord, as I have told Thee, asking Him to single out a husband for Thee, who shall be pleasing to Him and of the line of David; do Thou also pray

continually for the same favor, in order that the Most High may favor Thee and may direct us all."

749. This happened nine days before the one appointed for the execution and realization of their resolve. During this time the most holy Virgin multiplied her prayers, beseeching the Lord with incessant tears and sighs, to fulfill his divine pleasure in that which She had so much at heart. On one of those nine days the Lord appeared to Her and said to Her: "My Spouse and my Dove, let thy afflicted heart expand and let it not be disturbed or sad; I will attend to thy yearnings and to thy requests, I will direct all things, and will govern the priests by my enlightenment; I will give Thee a spouse selected by Myself, and one who will put no hindrance to thy holy desires, but who, by my grace will prosper Thee in them. I will find for Thee a perfect man conformable to my heart and I will choose him from the number of my servants; my power is infinite, and my protection and aid shall never fail Thee."

750. The most holy Mary answering said: "Highest Good and Love of my soul, Thou well knowest the secret of my bosom and my desires, which Thou hast excited in me from the first moment of the existence received from Thee; preserve me, then, my Spouse, pure and chaste, as I have desired for Thee and through Thee. Do not despise my sighs and deprive me not of thy countenance. Remember, my Lord and God, that I am but a useless wormlet, weak and despicable on account of my insignificance; and if I should fall away from virtue in the state of matrimony, I shall disappoint Thee and my desires; provide Thou for my security and be not deterred by my demerits. Although I am but useless dust (Gen. 18, 27), I will call on thy greatness, O Lord, trusting in thy infinite mercies."

751. The most chaste Maiden also approached her holy angels, whom She surpassed in sanctity and purity, and conferred with them many times concerning her anxieties in regard to the new state, which She was expected to enter. One day the holy spirits said to Her: "Spouse of the Most High, since Thou canst not ignore this title, nor much less the love which He, who is almighty and unfailing in his truth, has shown Thee, let thy heart, O Mistress, be at peace; for sooner will the heavens and the earth fail, than the fulfillment of his promises (Matth. 24, 27). All the events of thy life succeed each other according to the foreknowledge of thy Spouse; and his powerful arm, which governs the elements and all creatures, can suspend the forces of the impetuous waves and temper the vehemence of the elements, so that neither fire will burn nor the earth show its weight. His high judgments are secret and holy, his decrees are most just and wonderful, nor can creatures comprehend them; though they must revere them. If his Majesty wishes that Thou serve Him in matrimony, it will be better for Thee to please Him therein, than to displease Him in some other state of life. He will no doubt provide for Thee the most holy and perfect; trust Thou securely in his promises." This advice of the angels quieted somewhat the anxieties of our Princess. She asked them anew for protection and assistance, and that they present to the Lord in her name her entire subjection to that which his divine pleasure should ordain in her regard.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE PRINCESS OF HEAVEN.

752. My dearest daughter, most high and venerable are the judgments of the Lord, and they should not be

scrutinized by mortals, since they are impenetrable. His Majesty commanded me to enter the state of matrimony and at the same time concealed from me the sacrament dependent upon entering it. Matrimony was required, in order that my parturition might be respectable in the eyes of the world, and that the Word, made incarnate in my womb, might be reputed as the son of my husband, since at the same time the world was to remain ignorant of this mystery. It was also a suitable means to conceal this mystery from Lucifer and the demons, who in such rage were bent on wreaking their fury upon me. When they saw me enter the married state as other women, their fury was appeased, not thinking it compatible, that She should have a husband, who was to be the Mother of God himself; Lucifer himself was somewhat quieted by this means and made a truce with his malice. The Lord had also other ends in view, which have become manifest, although, on account of circumstances, they were hidden to me at that period of my life.

753. I wish Thee to understand, my daughter, that the certain prospect of being espoused to any man, without at the same time knowing the mystery concealed from me by the Lord, was the greatest sorrow and affliction, which until then I had ever experienced; and if the divine power had not strengthened me in this pain, and had not given me some kind of confidence, although it was only obscure and undetermined, I would have lost my life in this suffering. But from this event thou shouldst learn how complete must be the resignation of the creature to the will of the Most High, and how it must restrict its shortsighted judgment and guard against scrutinizing the secrets of a Majesty so exalted and mysterious. If any danger or difficulty seems to

present itself in that which the Lord commands, let man confide in Him and firmly believe that he was not placed therein in order to be forsaken, but in order that he may come forth victorious and triumphant, if he co-operates on his own part with the assistance given by the Lord. Whenever the soul seeks to scrutinize the decrees of his wisdom and satisfy itself before it obeys and believes, let it be convinced that it defrauds the Creator of its glory and honor, and at the same time loses for itself the merit of its works.

754. I was aware that God is superior to all creatures and that He had no need of our foresight; for He seeks only the subjection of our will, since the creature cannot give Him counsel, but only obedience and praise. And although, on account of not knowing what He wished of me and ordained for me in the state of matrimony, the love, which I had for chastity caused me much affliction; yet that grievous sorrow did not make me curious and inquisitive, but served to make my obedience more excellent and pleasing in his eyes. By this example thou thyself must regulate the subjection to that which thou perceivest to be according to the pleasure of the Lord thy Spouse, resigning thyself entirely to his protection and confiding in the firmness of his promises. And wherever thou hast the approbation of thy priests and superiors, allow thyself to be governed without any resistance to their commands and to the divine aspirations.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ESPOUSAL OF MOST HOLY MARY WITH THE MOST CHASTE SAINT JOSEPH.

755. On the day on which, as we have said in the preceding chapter, our Princess Mary completed the fourteenth year of her life, the men, who at that time in the city of Jerusalem were descendants of the tribe of Juda and of the race of David, gathered together in the temple. The sovereign Lady was also of that lineage. Among the number was Joseph, a native of Nazareth, and then living in Jerusalem; for he was one of the descendants of the royal race of David. He was then thirty-three years of age, of handsome person and pleasing countenance, but also of incomparable modesty and gravity; above all he was most chaste in thought and conduct, and most saintly in all his inclinations. From his twelfth year he had made and kept the vow of chastity. He was related to the Virgin Mary in the third degree, and was known for the utmost purity of his life, holy and irreprehensible in the eyes of God and of men.

756. All these unmarried men gathered in the temple and prayed to the Lord conjointly with the priests, in order to be governed by the holy Spirit in what they were about to do. The Most High spoke to the heart of the highpriest, inspiring him to place into the hands of each one of the young men a dry stick, with the command that each ask his Majesty with a lively faith, to single out the one whom He had chosen as the spouse of Mary. And as the sweet odor of her virtue and no-

bility, the fame of her beauty, her possessions and her modesty, and her position as being the firstborn in her family was known to all of them, each one coveted the happiness of meriting Her as a spouse. Among them all only the humble and most upright Joseph thought himself unworthy of such a great blessing; and remembering the vow of chastity which he had made and resolving anew its perpetual observance, he resigned himself to God's will, leaving it all to his disposal and being filled at the same time with a veneration and esteem greater than that of any of the others for the most noble maiden Mary.

757. While they were thus engaged in prayer the staff which Joseph held was seen to blossom and at the same time a dove of purest white and resplendent with admirable light, was seen to descend and rest upon the head of the saint, while in the interior of his heart God spoke: "Joseph, my servant, Mary shall be thy Spouse; accept Her with attentive reverence, for She is acceptable in my eyes, just and most pure in soul and body, and thou shalt do all that She shall say to Thee." At this manifestation and token from heaven the priests declared saint Joseph as the spouse selected by God himself for the maiden Mary. Calling Her forth for her espousal, the Chosen one issued forth like the sun, more resplendent than the moon, and She entered into the presence of all with a countenance more beautiful than that of an angel, incomparable in the charm of her beauty, nobility and grace; and the priests espoused Her to the most chaste and holy of men, saint Joseph.

758. The heavenly Princess, more pure than the stars of the firmament, with tearful and sorrowful countenance and as the Queen of majesty, most humble yet uniting all perfections within Herself, took leave of the

priests, asking their blessing, and of her instructress and her companions, begging their pardon. She gave thanks to all of them for the favors received at their hands during her stay in the temple. The humility of her behavior enhanced the prudence and aptness of her words for the performance of these last duties in the temple; for on all occasions She spoke in few and weighty words. She took leave of the temple not without great grief on account of the sacrifice of her inclinations and desires. In the company of attendants who were some of the more distinguished laymen in the service of the temple, She betook Herself with her spouse Joseph to Nazareth, the native city of this most fortunate married couple. Joseph, although he had been born in that place, had, by the providential disposition of circumstances, decided to live for some time in Jerusalem. Thus it happened that he so improved his fortune as to become the spouse of Her, whom God had chosen to be his own Mother.

759. Having arrived at their home in Nazareth, where the Princess of heaven had inherited the possessions and estates of her blessed parents, they were welcomed and visited by their friends and relatives with the joyful congratulations customary on such occasions. After they had in a most holy manner complied with the natural duties of friendship and politeness, and satisfied the worldly obligations connected with the conversation and intercourse of their fellowmen, the two most holy spouses, Joseph and Mary, were left at leisure and to their own counsel in their house. Custom had introduced the practice among the Hebrews, that for the first few days of their married state the husband and wife should enter upon a sort of study or trial of each others' habits and temperament, in order that afterwards

they might be able to make reciprocal allowance in their conduct one toward the other.

760. During this time saint Joseph said to his spouse Mary: "My spouse and Lady, I give thanks to the Lord most high God for the favor of having designed me as your husband without my merits, though I judged myself unworthy even of thy company; but his Majesty, who can raise up the lowly whenever He wishes, showed this mercy to me, and I desire and hope, relying on thy discretion and virtue, that Thou help me to make a proper return in serving Him with an upright heart. Hold me, therefore, as thy servant, and by the true love which I have for thee, I beg of thee to supply my deficiencies in the fulfillment of the domestic duties and of other things, which as a worthy husband, I should know how to perform; tell me, Lady, what is thy pleasure, in order that I may fulfill it."

761. The heavenly Spouse heard these words with an humble heart, and yet also with a serene earnestness, and She answered the saint: "My master, I am fortunate, that the Most High, in order to place me in this state of life, has chosen thee for my husband and that He has given me such evident manifestation of his will, that I serve thee; but if thou givest me leave I will speak of my thoughts and intentions, which I wish to manifest to thee for this purpose." The Most High forestalled the sincere and upright heart of saint Joseph with his grace and inflamed it anew with divine love through the word of most holy Mary, and he answered Her, saying: "Speak, Lady, thy servant hears." On this occasion the Mistress of the world was surrounded by the thousand angels of her guard, in visible form. She had asked them to be present in that manner, because the Lord, in order that the most pure Vir-

gin might act with greater grace and merit, had permitted her to feel the respect and reverence, with which She was bound to speak to her husband and left her to the natural shyness and dread, which She always felt in speaking to men alone; for She had never done this, except perhaps by accident with the highpriest.

762. The holy angels obeyed their Queen and, visible only to Her, stood in attendance. In this glorious company She spoke to her spouse saint Joseph, and said to him: "My lord and spouse, it is just that we give praise and glory with all reverence to our God and Creator, who is infinite in goodness and incomprehensible in his judgments. To us, who are so needy, He has manifested his greatness and mercy in choosing us for his service. I acknowledge myself among all creatures as more beholden and indebted to Him than all others, and more than all of them together; for, meriting less, I have received from his liberal hand more than they. At a tender age, being compelled thereto by the force of this truth, which, with the knowledge of the deceitfulness of visible things, his divine light made known to me, I consecrated myself to God by a perpetual vow of chastity in body and soul; his I am and Him I acknowledge as my Spouse and Lord, with fixed resolve to preserve for Him my chastity. I beseech thee, my master, to help me in fulfilling this vow, while in all other things I will be thy servant, willing to work for the comfort of thy life as long as mine shall last. Yield, my spouse, to this resolve and make a like resolve, in order that, offering ourselves as an acceptable sacrifice to our eternal God, He may receive us in the odor of sweetness and bestow on us the eternal goods for which we hope."

763. The most chaste spouse Joseph, full of interior joy at the words of his heavenly Spouse, answered Her:

"My Mistress, in making known to me thy chaste and welcome sentiments, thou hast penetrated and dilated my heart. I have not opened my thoughts to Thee before knowing thy own. I also acknowledge myself under greater obligation to the Lord of creation than other men; for very early He has called me by his true enlightenment to love Him with an upright heart; and I desire Thee to know, Lady, that at the age of twelve years I also made a promise to serve the Most High in perpetual chastity. On this account I now gladly ratify this vow in order not to impede thy own; in the presence of his Majesty I promise to aid Thee, as far as in me lies, in serving Him and loving Him according to thy full desires. I will be, with the divine grace, thy most faithful servant and companion, and I pray Thee accept my chaste love and hold me as thy brother, without ever entertaining any other kind of love, outside the one which Thou owest to God and after God to me." In this conversation the Most High confirmed anew the virtue of chastity in the heart of saint Joseph, and the pure and holy love due to his most holy spouse Mary. This love the saint already had in an eminent degree, and the Lady herself augmented it sweetly, dilating his heart by her most prudent discourse.

764. By divine operation the two most holy and chaste Spouses felt an incomparable joy and consolation. The heavenly Princess, as one who is the Mistress of all virtues and who in all things pursued the highest perfection of all virtues, lovingly corresponded to the desires of saint Joseph. The Most High also gave to saint Joseph new purity and complete command over his natural inclinations, so that without hindrance or any trace of sensual desires, but with admirable and new grace, he might serve his spouse Mary, and in Her, execute his

will and pleasure. They immediately set about dividing the property inherited from saint Joachim and Anne, the parents of the most holy Virgin; one part they offered to the temple, where She had stayed, another they destined for the poor, and the third was left in the hands of the holy spouse saint Joseph to be disposed of according to his judgment. Our Queen reserved for Herself only the privilege of serving Him and of attending to the household duties. For from intercourse with outsiders and from the management of property, buying or selling, the most prudent Virgin always kept aloof, as I will mention farther on (552, 553).

765. In his former life saint Joseph had learnt the trade of carpentering as being a respectable and proper way of earning the sustenance in life. He was poor in earthly possessions, as I have said above. He therefore asked his most holy Spouse, whether it was agreeable to Her, that he should exercise his trade in order to be able to serve Her and to gain something for distribution among the poor; since it was necessary to do some work and not to remain idle. The most prudent Virgin approved of this resolve, saying that the Lord did not wish them to be rich, but poor and lovers of the poor, desirous of helping them in as far as their means would allow. Then arose between the two Spouses a holy contest, who should obey the other as superior. But She, who among the humble was the most humble, won in this contest of humility; for as the man is the head of the family, She would not permit this natural order to be inverted. She desired in all things to obey her spouse saint Joseph, asking him solely for permission to help the poor, which the saint gladly gave.

766. As saint Joseph during these days by divine enlightenment learnt to know more and more the qualities

of his spouse Mary, her rare prudence, humility, purity and all her other virtues exceeding by far his thoughts and estimates, he was seized with ever new admiration and, in great joy of spirit, continued to praise and thank the Lord again and again for having given him a Companion and Spouse so far above his merits. And in order that this work of the Most High might be entirely perfect (for it was the beginning of the greatest, which He was to execute by his Omnipotence) He ordained that the Princess of heaven, by her mere presence and intercourse, should infuse into the heart of her spouse a holy fear and reverence greater than words could ever suffice to describe. This effect was wrought upon saint Joseph by an effulgence or reflection of the divine light, which shone from the face of our Queen and which was mingled with an ineffable and always visible majesty. So much the more was this due to Her than to Moses descending from the mountain, (Exod. 24, 30) as her intercourse and conversation with God had been more extended and intimate.

767. Soon after most holy Mary had a vision of the Lord, in which God spoke to Her: "My most beloved Spouse and Chosen one, behold how faithful I am to my promises with those who love Me. Correspond therefore now to my fidelity by observing all the laws of a spouse, in holiness, purity and all perfection and let the company of my servant Joseph, whom I have given Thee, help thee thereto. Obey him as thou shouldst and listen to his advice." The most holy Mary responded: "Most high Lord, I praise and magnify Thee for thy admirable disposition and providence in my regard, though I am so unworthy and poor a creature; I desire to obey Thee and please Thee as one having greater obligation to Thee than any other. Be-

stow upon me, my Lord, thy divine favor, in order that I may be assisted in all things and governed according to thy pleasure, and also in order that I may attend to the duties of the state, in which Thou hast placed me, never as Thy slave erring from thy commands and wishes. Show me thy good will and blessing and with it I will strive to obey and serve thy servant Joseph, in such a manner as Thou, my Lord and Maker, commandest."

768. On such heavenly beginnings was founded the home and the married life of the most holy Mary and saint Joseph. From the eighth of September, when they were espoused, until the twenty-fifth of March following, when the Incarnation of the divine Word took place (as I will say in the second part), the two Spouses thus lived together, being prepared in the meanwhile for the work designated for them by the Most High.

769. But I cannot at this juncture withhold my words of congratulation at the good fortune of the most happy among men, saint Joseph. Whence is it, O man of God, that thou among all sons of Adam, shouldst have the happiness and good fortune of possessing God himself in such a manner, that He conducted Himself and was reputed as thy only Son? The eternal Father gives to Thee his Son, and the Son gives to thee his true and real Mother, and the Holy Ghost entrusts to thee his Spouse, while the whole blessed Trinity in its turn yields and espouses to thee as thy legitimate wife its chosen One, its only One, elect as the sun? Dost thou realize, O Saint, thy dignity? Dost thou know thy excellence? Dost thou understand, that thy Spouse is the Queen and Lady of heaven and earth and that Thou art the depositary of the inestimable treasures of God himself? Be mindful, man of God, of thy entrusted pledge

and know, that if thou art not envied by the angels and seraphim, thou hast certainly filled them with wonder and astonishment at thy good fortune and at the sacramental mystery connected with thy matrimony. Accept the congratulations for such great happiness in the name of the whole human race. Thou art the archive of the history of the divine mercies, the master and spouse of Her, who is inferior only to God himself; thou findest thyself enriched and prosperous in the sight of all men and of the angels themselves. Remember our poverty and misery, and remember me the most worthless worm of the earth: for I desire to be thy client, blessed and favored by thy powerful intercession.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

770. My daughter, in the example of the matrimonial life wherein the Most High placed me, thou findest a reproof for those souls, who allege their life in the world as an excuse for not following perfection. To God nothing is impossible, and nothing is likewise impossible to those, who with a lively faith, hope in Him, and resign themselves entirely to his divine Providence. I lived in the house of my spouse with the same perfection as in the temple; for in changing my state of life I altered neither my sentiments nor the desire and anxiety to love and serve God; on the contrary I added to my solicitude lest the obligations of a spouse should hinder me in God's service. On this account God favored me and disposed and accommodated powerfully all things in conformity to my desires. The Lord will do the same for all men, if on their part they correspond. They however blame the state of matrimony, deceiving themselves; for the hindrance to a holy and perfect life, is not the state, but the vain and superfluous cares and

anxieties, in which they involve themselves forgetting the sweetness of the Lord and seeking and preferring their own.

771. And if there is no excuse for not living a perfect life in the world, still less will the duties and obligations of the religious state be an excuse. Never imagine thyself exempt from the pursuit of perfection on account of being a superioress; for since God has placed thee in office by obedience, thou must not despair of his assistance and protection; He himself will each day assume the responsibility of strengthening thee and helping thee to fulfill thy duties, without relaxing in the pursuit of a perfect love due to God. Oblige Him by the sacrifice of thy own will, submitting in humble patience to all that his divine Providence may ordain. If thou dost not hinder the course of his Providence, I assure thee of his protection and of the power of his divine arm to direct thee and guide all thy actions toward perfection.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN EXPLANATION OF CHAPTER XXXI OF THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON, TO WHICH THE LORD REFERRED ME REGARDING THE LIFE OF MOST HOLY MARY IN MATRIMONY.

772. As soon as the Princess of heaven, Mary, found Herself so unexpectedly in the new state of matrimony, She raised her pure soul to the Father of light for illumination and direction in the fulfillment of all its obligations according to his pleasure. In order to give me some insight into her holy thoughts at this time, the Lord referred me to the last chapter of the Proverbs, in which Solomon outlined the virtues of our Lady in describing the qualities and doings of a valiant woman. Discoursing on this chapter I will say as much as I can of what I was made to understand regarding Her. The chapter begins with the words: "Who shall find a valiant woman? The price of Her is as of things brought from afar off and from the uttermost coasts." This question is one implying admiration in regard to our great and valiant woman Mary and a doubt in regard to all other women, when compared with Her; for none other as valiant can be found in the whole range of the human and natural existence. All the others are weak and wanting, not one being exempt from tribute to the demon through the guilt of sin. Who then will find another woman? Not the kings and monarchs, nor the princes of the earth, nor the angels of heaven, nor the divine power itself will find another, since it had not created

another like Her: She is the only one, without a peeress or one resembling Her, who was exalted in dignity according to the measure of his own Omnipotence. For He could not have given Her more than his own eternal Son, consubstantial, equal to Him in immensity, uncreated and infinite.

773. Accordingly the price of this Woman is as something coming from afar, since upon earth and among creatures there was none like to Her. The price of a thing is the value for which a thing is bought or at which it is estimated; then is its price known, when it is known at what value it is held or estimated. The price of this valiant woman Mary was set in the council of the most blessed Trinity, when God himself claimed or purchased Her for Himself in advance of all the other creatures, having received Her in real purchase as a sort of return for the creation of the whole human nature. The price and payment, which He gave for Mary, was the incarnate Word itself and the eternal Father (according to our way of speaking) considered Himself sufficiently repaid by Mary. For finding this valiant Woman in his divine mind, He set such a value on Her, that He devoted his only Son to be at the same time his Son and Hers: and the Son himself took from Her human flesh and chose Her as Mother. Thus this purchase price by which the Most High acquired and appropriated Her, included his wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, justice and all other attributes, and all the merits of his Son, releasing beforehand the whole human race from debt; so that, if all men were to be lost as Adam had lost himself, He would still have left Mary and her Son. Hence truly She was estimated at a price so distant, that all creation would not be able to reach an estimate and appreciation of it. This is meant by the saying "that She came from afar."

774. By this term "afar" are also to be understood the ends of the earth; for God is the last end and the beginning of all creation, from which all things proceed and to which all things return, as the streams return to the sea (Eccles. 1, 7). Also the empyrean heaven is the final material end of all corporeal matter; and it is called in an especial way the footstool of the Divinity (Isaias 66, 1). Yet, in another sense, the end of natural life and the full perfection of virtue might be called the ends of the earth, for in these is fulfilled the purpose of man's natural existence; being called forth by the Creator for the knowledge and love of God, He himself is the ultimate and most apparent end of life and action. All this is included, when the price of most holy Mary is said to come from the farthest ends. Her graces, gifts and merits came and commenced from the ultimate regions, they began where those of the other saints, the Virgins, Confessors, Martyrs, Apostles and Patriarchs ended: they in all their lives and all their sanctity did not arrive at the point where Mary merely commenced. And if Christ, her Son and our Lord, calls Himself the end of the works of Abraham, so can it be said with equal justice, that the price of most holy Mary is as from the farthest ends; for all her purity, innocence and sanctity came from her most holy Son as the exemplary, anteceding and principal cause of Her alone.

775. "The heart of her husband trusteth in Her, and he shall have no need of spoils." (Prov. 31, 11). It is certain that the heavenly Joseph is called the husband of this valiant Woman, as he had legitimately espoused Her; and it is also certain, that his heart confided in Her, believing that on account of her incomparable virtues all true blessings would come to him. But especially did he trust in Her when he perceived her pregnancy

and yet was ignorant of its mysterious origin; for then he believed and hoped against hope (Rom. 4, 18); all indications being adverse and having no other foundation for his hopeful belief, than the holiness of such a Spouse and Wife. And although he resolved to leave Her (Matth. 1, 19) as he saw the outward tokens of pregnancy with his own eyes without the slightest knowledge of the cause; yet he never ventured to distrust her honor and modesty, nor did he ever diminish in his holy and pure love, with which his most upright heart was bound to such a Spouse. Nor was he disappointed in anything, nor was he in need of spoils; for if spoils are things that are superfluous, then this man was abundantly supplied with them, as soon as he knew who was his Spouse and what belonged to Her.

776. But this heavenly Mistress had another Man, who confided in Her, and to Him principally does Solomon refer; and this Man was her own Son, the true God and Man, who confided in this Woman to the extent of his own life and honor in the face of all creation. In this confidence was included the greatness of both these, his life and his honor; for neither God could confide more to Her, nor could She correspond better so as to assure Him of superabundant return. O what a miracle of the infinite power and wisdom! That God should trust Himself to a mere creature and a woman, assuming flesh in her womb and of her very substance! To call her Mother with unchangeable confidence, and She to call Him Son, nurse Him at her breast and have Him subject to her commands! That She should be his Coadjutrix in the rescue and restoration of the world, the Depositary of the Divinity, the Dispensatrix of his infinite treasures and of the merits of his most holy Son, and of all the merits of his life, his miracles, his

preaching, his death and of all the other mysteries! All this He confided to most holy Mary. But our wonder increases, when we find that He was not frustrated in his confidence; for we see that a mere Creature recognized and could adequately fulfill such a trust, without failing in the least point, and in such a manner, that She could not act with greater faith, love, prudence, humility and perfection of all holiness. Her Man found Himself in no need of spoils, but rich, prosperous and well supplied with honor and renown. Therefore Scripture adds:

777. "She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life." That for which most holy Mary makes a return to her Man, I understand to be the blessing, which Christ, her true Son, rendered unto Her; for what, She herself rendered is already mentioned. The equity, which the Lord observes in remunerating with the greatest blessings and favors even the smallest good deed, will enable us to form some idea of those which flowed from the divine power upon our Queen during her life. They commenced from the first instant of her existence and were showered upon Her more abundantly than upon the highest angels as a fitting adjunct of her preservation from original sin; She corresponded with these favors in an adequate manner and co-operated with them to the utmost limit, and all the deeds of her life were without remissness, negligence or tardiness. What wonder then, that only her most holy Son was superior to Her and that all the rest of the creatures were left behind as it were at an infinite distance?

778. "She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands." A well beseeming praise and worthy of a valiant woman: that she

should be industrious and diligent within her home, spinning flax and weaving linen for the shelter and comfort of her family, providing these things for the inmates and for others, who may be benefited thereby. This is profitable counsel, which is put in practice by hands industrious and not idle; for the idleness of a woman, who lives from hand to mouth, is a proof of base foolishness and of other vices, which cannot be imputed without shame. In this exterior virtue, which in a married woman is the foundation of good domestic management, most holy Mary was a valiant woman and a worthy example to all the womankind. For She was never idle, but was diligently engaged in preparing linen and wool for her spouse and for her Son and for many poor, whom She aided by the labor of her hands. Nevertheless, since She joined in the most perfect manner the works of Martha with those of Mary, She was more busy with the counsels of her heart in regard to interior works than in the works of her hand. Preserving the memory of the divine visions and the sayings of the holy Scriptures, She was never interiorly at leisure, but continued to utilize and increase the gifts and virtues of her soul. Accordingly the text continues:

779. "She is like the merchant ship, she bringeth her bread from afar." As this visible world is called an unquiet and stormy sea, those that live upon it and are tossed about upon it, can appropriately be called ships. All are engaged in this navigation in order to earn their bread, namely the sustenance and the maintenance of this life, which is meant by bread. That vessel brings its bread from the farthest distance, which is farthest from what it is to procure; and that, which spends more labor upon it, gains the more, since it brings it from afar by so much the greater difficulty. There is a

sort of agreement between God and man, that while they, as servants cultivate the earth and work upon it in the sweat of their brow, making use of the secondary causes by which the Lord of all succors them, the earth in return should sustain man and pay him for his perspiration and labor. What happens in regard to this temporal contract, happens also in regard to the spiritual, namely, that he who does not work shall also not eat.

780. Among all the children of Adam most holy Mary was the rich and prosperous merchant ship, which brought her own and our bread from afar. No one ever was so discreetly diligent and zealous in the government of her house; no one so solicitous for that, which in divine prudence She deemed necessary for its support and for succoring the needy. She merited and earned all this by the most prudent solicitude, by which She brought it from afar; for She was far removed from our vicious nature and from all its doings. How much She thus acquired, merited and distributed to the needy ones is impossible to conceive. But still more estimable and admirable was the spiritual and living Bread, which She drew down from heaven for us; for She not only drew It from the bosom of the Father, whence It would not have descended, if It had not been drawn by this valiant Woman, but It would never have come to this world, so greatly unworthy of It, if It had not been brought in the ship of Mary. Although She could not, as a mere creature, merit the advent of God into the world, yet She merited the hastening of his advent, and She merited, that He should come in the rich ship of her womb; for, since God could not take abode in any other inferior to Her in merit, She alone induced Him to become visible and to communicate Himself, and to nourish those who were so far off.

781. "And She hath risen in the night, and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens." Not less laudable is this activity of the valiant woman, that she deprived Herself of the repose and sweet rest of the night in order to govern her family, directing her domestics, her husband, her sons and relations, and also her servants to perform their duties and all that is necessary for the welfare of the family. This kind of valor and prudence does not look upon night as the time for disengaging itself and forgetting in sleep its duties and obligations; withdrawal from work should not be sought merely to satisfy a whim, but as a necessary means for returning to it so much the more ardently. Our Queen was truly admirable in this prudent kind of economy; although She had no servants in her family, because her love of obedience and humility did not permit her to charge any one but Herself with the servile duties of the house; nevertheless, in the care for her most holy Son and for her spouse Joseph, She rendered the most vigilant service and never was She guilty of any remissness, forgetfulness, tardiness, or inadvertency in providing what was necessary for them, as I shall have occasion to relate in the whole of the succeeding discourse.

782. But what tongue could ever describe the untiring watchfulness of this valiant Woman? She arose and was on her feet in the night, when divine secrets were still withheld from her heart; and in the hidden darkness of the mystery of her matrimony She lived in vigilant hope of its unravelment, attentive to execute humbly and obediently, whatever was commanded to Her. She provided all the necessary nourishment for her domestics and servants, namely her interior faculties and her exterior senses, and distributed to each one its sustenance in the labor of the day, so that while they were

engaged in the outward service, the spirit might not find itself needy and unprovided. She commanded the faculties of her soul to follow the inviolable rule of seeking its sustenance from the light of the Divinity, of being incessantly occupied in the ardent meditation and contemplation of the holy law day and night, never allowing it at any time to be withdrawn therefrom by exterior work or occupation of her state of life. This was the government and the nourishment of the servants of her soul.

783. Also to the other servants, the exterior senses, She distributed their legitimate occupation and nourishment; making use of the jurisdiction, which She possessed over these faculties, She commanded, that, as servants, they serve the spirit; that, though in the world, they be dead to it and ignore its vanities and live solely in as far as was necessary for nature and grace; that they be not taken up with sensible delights, except in so far as the superior part of the soul should allow and communicate by its overflowing influence. She placed boundaries and limits to all their operations, so that without the slightest imperfection they were appropriated to the sphere of divine love, all of them serving and co-operating with it without resistance, unwillingness or tardiness.

784. In another way also She arose and governed Her Domestics. For there was another kind of night in which this valiant Woman rose and other servants for which She provided. She arose in the night of the ancient Law, in the obscure dawn of the future light: She came into the world at the decline of that night and with ineffable foresight She proffered and distributed the nourishment of grace and of eternal life to all her domestics and to the servants, namely her own people, to

the rest of the human race, to the holy Fathers and the just of her own nation, and to the sinners, slaves and captives of all the world. And She gave it so truly and so fully, that the nourishment was taken from her own substance and from her own blood, since it originated in her virginal womb.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED: THE REST OF THE THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF THE PROVERBS IS EXPLAINED.

785. No quality of a valiant woman could be wanting in our Queen, for She was the fountain of virtue and of grace. Our text continues in the sixteenth verse: "She hath considered a field and bought it: with the fruits of her hand She hath planted a vineyard." The field of highest perfection, where the abundant and fragrant fruits of virtue are reared, was the one which most holy Mary considered; and as She was inspecting and taxing it by the clearness of the divine light, She recognized the treasure, which was buried in it. In order to buy this field She exchanged for it her property rights in all the earth, of which She was truly the Queen and Mistress, preferring the possession of this field to all other things and abdicating in favor of it the use and right of all her possessions. This Mistress alone could dispose of all creation, for She alone had the full possession of it, and She alone could buy the whole field of holiness. She alone could examine and estimate its full value and She alone, next to God, appropriated to Herself, the field of the Divinity and its attributes, while the other saints could appropriate only a part. "With the fruits of her hands She hath planted a vineyard." She planted the holy Church, not only by giving us her most holy Son to form and constitute it, but by being Herself his Coadjutrix, and after his Ascension, remain-

ing the Mistress of the Church, as will be related in the third part of this history. She planted the vineyard of the paradise, which that fierce beast Lucifer had ruined and devastated, thus restoring it to fruitfulness by her solicitude. She planted the vineyard of her most great and magnanimous heart, setting in it the sprouts of virtue and the most fertile vines, from which Christ in the winepress of the Cross distilled the most sweet wine of his love to inebriate his beloved and nourish his friends (Cant. 5, 1).

786. "She hath girdled her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm." The greatest strength of those who call themselves strong is in their arm, with which they perform hard and difficult works: and the most difficult work of earthly men consists in restricting their passions and inclinations and subjecting them to reason. Therefore the holy text says of this valiant Woman, that She both girds her loins and strengthens her arm. Our Queen was subject to no passions or disorderly inclinations, which She would have to suppress in her most innocent person; but this did not hinder Her from being more courageous in restricting Herself than all the children of Adam, whose interior is thrown into disorder by the consequences of sin. Without having need thereof her virtues and her love urged Her to practice greater mortification than the most wicked inclinations could ever have required. None of those, who were infected by sin and who were bound to satisfy for it, ever exerted such strength in mortifying their disorderly passions, as our Princess Mary exerted in governing and mortifying more and more all her faculties and senses. She chastised her most innocent and virginal body by incessant penances, watchings, fasts, prostrations in the form of the cross, as we shall say

later on (Part II, 12, 232, 442, 568, 898, 990, 991; Part III, 581); She denied to her senses all rest and indulgence, not because they were in disorder, but so as continually to perform what was most holy and acceptable before God, being never weak, never remiss or negligent in bringing all her works to the full measure and efficacy of grace.

787. "She hath tasted and seen that her traffic is good: her lamp shall not be put out in the night." The Lord is so kind and faithful with creatures, that, when He commands us to gird ourselves with mortification and penance, (since the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and must be gained by force (Matth. 12, 12), on account of this violence to our inclinations, He rewards our efforts with a joy and consolation, that fill our heart with delight. By this joy we know how good is this exchange of the highest good for those works of mortification by which we restrain our hankering after temporal pleasure; for as a prepayment we receive the joys of the Christian truth and in it a pledge of eternal life. And the more we engage in this kind of commerce, the more we will gain and the greater will be our esteem for this commerce.

788. If we, who are subject to sin, experience this truth, how much more intimately did most holy Mary understand and appreciate it? And if in us, in whom the night of sin is so dense and persistent, the divine light of grace can be preserved by means of penance and mortification of our passions, how must this light have burned in the heart of that most pure Creature? She was not oppressed by the infection of our gross and corrupted nature; She had not been scorched by the tinder of disobedience; She was not stung by the reproaches of a bad conscience, nor by the fear of actual

sin; and besides all this She was enlightened beyond all conception of angels or men: She understood well and enjoyed this kind of commerce, without extinguishing, in the troubles and dangers of this life, the light-giving lamp of the Lamb (Apoc. 31, 19).

789. "She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." The valiant Woman, who with the exertion and the labor of her hands increases her virtues and the goods of her family, who girds Herself with fortitude against her passions, who recognizes the delights of the commerce of virtue, could well extend and reach out her hand toward great things. Most holy Mary, did this unhindered by her state and its obligations; for, elevating Herself above Herself and above all earthly things, She enlarged her aspirations and extended her operations to what was greatest and mightiest in the spheres of divine love and knowledge, rising above all human and angelic natures. And as with her espousal She approached nearer and nearer to the dignity and state of Mother, She continued to expand her heart and extend her hand to new works of holiness, until She fitted Herself to co-operate in the most arduous and sublime work of the divine Omnipotence, namely the Incarnation of the Word. Of all this I will say more in the second part, when explaining the preparation of our Queen for this great mystery (Part II, 1 to 160). And because the mere resolve or determination to do great things and without their fulfillment is futile and of no practical consequence, therefore it is said: "And her fingers have taken hold of the spindle," which means to say, that our Queen really executed all the great, arduous and difficult works, exactly as She had intended and proposed in her most well ordered mind. In all things She was found true,

and far from the exaggeration and mere outward show of a woman, who carries the distaff at her girdle, but does not take hold of the spindle. Therefore it is added:

790. "She hath opened her hand to the needy and stretched out her hand to the poor." The prudent woman and housewife shows great courage in being liberal with the poor, never yielding to weakness of mind, or cowardly diffidence, lest, on account of her alms, her family should suffer; for the most powerful means of increasing all possessions is to part liberally with them for the poor of Christ, who even in this life knows how to give a hundredfold in return (Marc. 10, 30). Most holy Mary distributed to the poor and to the temple the inheritance of her parents, as I said above (761); besides this She gave the labor of her hands to assist in the works of mercy; for without contributing her personal exertion and labor, She could not have satisfied her pious and generous love of the poor. It is no wonder, that the avaricious world of today should feel want and poverty in temporal things, since men are become so deficient in kindness and pity for the poor: they use that, which God created for the sustenance of the needy and for the salvation of the rich, only for satisfying their vanities.

791. Our most kind Queen and Lady, however, did not extend only her own hands to the poor: She also drew forth the Almighty hand of the omnipotent God; for as yet He had not extended the helping hand of his divine Word towards mortals, who did not merit, or rather, who were making themselves unworthy of such a favor, this valiant Woman gave Him hands, hands extended and opened for the benefit of us poor captives afflicted by the misery of sin. Because this neediness and poverty was the lot of all men, Scripture uses the

word "poor" in the singular; for all the human race was like one poor person, capable of providing for itself no more than if all men had been only one single poor person. The hands of our Savior, Christ our Lord, extended for our Redemption and opened for the distribution of his gifts and merits, were none other than the very hands of most holy Mary; for He, as her Son, had them from Her and without Mary the unfortunate race would never have seen them opened for their relief. They were hers also in many other respects.

792. "She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed in double garments." Having lost the Sun of Justice, the warmth of grace and original justice, our nature was buried under the frozen snow of sin, with all its power for doing good restricted, impeded and congealed. Thence arise the difficulties in the performance of holy works, the slowness of our actions, our inattention and negligence, our instability and numerous other defects in the practice of virtue; thence it comes, that we find ourselves, after the commission of sin, deprived of the love of God, without shelter or covering against temptations. Our heavenly Queen was free from all these impediments and defects in body and soul; for all her domestics, that is her interior and exterior faculties, were sheltered from the frost of sin by double vestments. On the one hand She was protected by original justice and the infused virtues, together with the virtues acquired by her own exertions from the first moment of her activity. On the other hand She was also protected by the double vestment of the common graces, which She received on her own account, and those, which She received in an especial manner on account of her dignity as Mother of God. I will not detain myself in describing her provi-

dent care for her own household; for in other women the care which they bestow in this matter, may be praiseworthy because it is necessary; in the house of the Queen of heaven and earth, most holy Mary, it was not necessary to multiply the garments: not for Her Son, since He possessed but one; not for Herself, nor for her spouse Joseph, since their poverty was their greatest adornment and shelter.

793. "She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry: fine linen, and purple is her covering." This metaphor likewise indicates the spiritual adornments of this Woman; it was a garment variegated and strong, serving completely as a covering and defending Her from the inclemencies and rigors of the rainstorms; for this is the purpose, for which strong blankets, raincoats and the like are woven. The long cloak of virtue and gifts of Mary was impenetrable to the powerful streams of temptation and assault, which the great red and sanguinary dragon poured out against Her and which saint John saw in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 1, 15). Greater than the strength of this vestment was the beauty and variety of her virtues, woven into it and not merely apparent; for they had, so to say, become a part of her flesh and blood, and of the substance of her nature from the very moment, in which She obtained her existence in grace and original justice. In Her were the purple of charity, the white of chastity and purity, the azure of hope, with all the other variety of gifts and graces, which clothed Her about entirely and adorned Her in all their beauty. Also the white and the red, which the Spouse designates as the special tokens of the humanity and the Divinity of the Son, adorned Her (Cant. 5, 10); for as She gave to the Word the red of his most holy Humanity, He in return gave her the splendor

of the Divinity, not uniting both these natures in her virginal womb, but leaving in his Mother emanations and rays of the Divinity more excellent than in all the other creatures together.

794. "Her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sitteth among the senators of the land." Just as in the olden times judgment was held under the city gates, so at the portals of eternal life, judgment is pronounced separately over each one; whereas on the last day we are to expect the general judgment of the whole world. In the universal judgment saint Joseph, one of the men of the most holy Mary, will take his seat among the nobility of the kingdom of God; for he will sit in judgment with the Apostles over the world, enjoying this privilege as the spouse of the valiant Woman, the Queen of all, and as the putative father of the supreme Judge. The other Man of this Lady is her Son, as I have already said (774), and He is acknowledged and recognized as the supreme Lord and true Judge both in the particular judgment, and in that, which is to be held over the angels and all men. This supreme power devolves in part also upon most holy Mary; for it was She, who gave Him the flesh, with which He redeemed the world.

795. "She made fine linen, and sold it, and delivered a girdle to the Chananite." In this solicitous labor of the valiant Woman are pointed out two excellences of our great Queen. First She made a linen so pure, so spacious and large, that the eternal Word, although He had to constrain and limit his greatness, could descend and clothe Himself in it, and She sold it to no one else than the Lord himself, who gave Her in return his own Son. For there was nothing in all creation, which was of sufficient price to buy this linen sheet of the

purity and sanctity of Mary, nor could any man merit to be her son, except the Son of God himself. She also gave, not sold, most graciously, a cincture to the Chananite, cursed by his father (Gen. 9, 25); for all those that participated in the first malediction and were despoiled and subjected to disorderly appetites and inclinations, could now gird themselves anew by the cincture which most holy Mary procured for them through her only and firstborn and only Son and through the law of grace. Thereby being able to reform themselves and gird themselves with new strength. No excuse remains for the foreknown and the damned, angels and men, since all of them had the means to restrain themselves against their disorderly passions, equally with the predestined. For they can avail themselves of the graces gratuitously obtained for them by most holy Mary and no payment is required for them.

796. "Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day." Another new adornment and vestment of the valiant Woman are strength and beauty: strength makes Her invincible in suffering and in operating against the infernal powers; beauty gives her exterior grace and admirable decorum in all her actions. On account of these two prerogatives our Queen was amiable in the eyes of God, and of the angels, and of the world. She was not only free from all reprehension of sin and defect, but She possessed that double grace and beauty, which pleased and charmed so much the holy Spirit, when He said, that She was entirely beautiful and pleasing to Him (Cant. 4, 7). And where there is no fault to be deplored, there also is no cause of mourning on the last day, when none of the mortals shall be without such cause except this our Lady and her most holy Son. All others were tainted

with some defect, for which they must grieve, and on that day the damned will weep for not having properly wept over their sins before. On that day this valiant Woman shall be full of delight and joy, returning thanks for her own incomparable felicity, as also for the execution of the divine justice against the wicked and rebellious by her most holy Son.

797. "She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue." This great excellency of the valiant Woman is not to open her mouth for ought except to teach the fear of the Lord, or in pursuance of some work of clemency. This our Queen and Lady fulfilled in the highest perfection. She opened her mouth as the Mistress of wisdom, when She said to the holy archangel: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum" (Luke 1, 38) and whenever She spoke, it was as the most prudent Virgin and as one filled with the knowledge of the Most High, as a Teacher to all, and as one interceding for the miserable children of Eve. The law of clemency was always on her lips, as a most kind Mother of mercy and her intercession and prayer is by itself an inviolable law, on which our deliverance depends in all our necessities; we are safe, if only we know how to induce Her to open her mouth and move Her tongue for our intercession.

798. "She hath looked well to the path of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle." It is no small honor for the mother of a family to keep a strict watch over all the ways of augmenting most unfailingly its property and happiness; but in this divine prudence none except Mary gave an altogether perfect example to mortals. She alone knew how to investigate and search all the ways to justice and to find the straight roads by which with greater security and speed the Divinity can be

reached. She attained to this knowledge so expeditiously, that She outstripped all mortals and even the cherubim and seraphim themselves. She recognized and detected good and evil, the height and the depth of sanctity, the extent of human weakness, the astuteness of our enemies, the dangers infesting the world and all that is terrestrial. At the same time She put all her knowledge into practice, never eating her bread idle, and receiving neither her soul nor divine grace in vain (Psalm 23, 4). And thus She merited what follows.

799. "Her children rose up, and called her blessed: her husband, and he praised Her." Great and glorious things have the true sons of this Woman said of Her in the Church militant, calling Her most blessed among women; and let not those, that have not risen up and praised Her, call themselves Her children, nor learned, nor wise, nor devout. Yet although all the saints of the Church have spoken, being inspired and moved by her Man and Spouse, Christ and the Holy Ghost, nevertheless it seems as if He has as yet only kept silence and has not yet risen to publish the countless and exalted mysteries concerning his most holy Mother. I was given to understand, that they are so great as to be reserved for revelation only in the triumphant Church after the last judgment; for it would not be opportune to manifest them now to this world, which is unworthy and incapable of understanding such wonders. There Christ will speak, the Man of Mary, in order to manifest his and her glory, and for the joy of the saints, the prerogatives and the excellences of that Lady; there shall we know them in full. Here it is sufficient, that we reverently recognize them under the veil of faith, and that we live now in the hope of fully understanding these great blessings in the future life.

800. "Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all." All the souls, that have come to the attainment of the grace of the Most High, are called his daughters; and all the merits, gifts and graces, which they gained or could gain, are true riches; for earthly possessions have unjustly usurped the name of riches. Great will be the number of the predestined: He that has enumerated the stars by their names knows it (Psalm 144, 4). But Mary has gathered more riches than all who are children of Adam and of Herself; She alone attained such a position, not only so as to be called their Mother, and they, her children; but so as to become the Mother of God himself; for in this She far surpasses all the glory that the entire number of the predestined ever possessed or will possess. And because, in comparison with these riches and gifts of interior grace and their corresponding glory the exterior and apparent outward appearance of women, which is held in so high esteem by them, is but vanity, Solomon adds and says:

801. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; therefore the woman that feareth the Lord, shall be praised. Give her of the fruits of her hands; and let her works praise her in the gates." The world falsely esteems as gracious many things, that are not so, and that have no more of beauty and grace in them than what they derive from the erroneous judgment of the ignorant; as for example the outward appearance of virtue in our works; the pleasure excited by sweet and eloquent words; wit and elegance in our speech or behaviour; the benevolence of superiors, or popularity. All this is deceitful and fallacious, no less than the beauty of a woman, which vanishes in so short a time. She who fears God and teaches others to fear Him, merits truly the praise of

men and of the Lord himself. And because God himself wishes to praise Her, Scripture says: "Give her of the fruit of her hands:" He proportions his praise also to the excellence of the deeds publicly known to Her, and intimates, that these deeds themselves proclaim Her praise. The praise of men is of small value to one who degrades herself by her own conduct. Accordingly the Most High wishes that the deeds of his most holy Mother shall become manifest in the portals of his holy Church in so far as is possible and opportune, as I said above; while the greater glory and praise is reserved for Her in the heavenly Church and will endure through all the ages and ages. Amen.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

802. In this chapter of holy Scriptures thou hast at thy disposal many points of information for thy proper guidance; and although thou hast not touched upon all that it contains, yet I wish, that thou write in thy inmost heart, as well that which thou hast declared, as also that which thou hast omitted, and I wish that thou put it into practice. For this purpose it is necessary, that thou live retired within thyself, forgetful of all the visible and terrestrial things, most attentive to the divine light, which assists thee and protects thy sensible faculties with double vestments against the influences of lukewarmness and coldness on the way of perfection; and it is necessary, that thou resist the incitements of thy unruly passions. Gird them and restrict them by the powerful means of the fear of God. Withdrawn from the deceitful outward appearances, raise thy mind to the contemplation and the understanding of thy interior condition and of the paths, which the Lord has shown thee for seeking Him in secret and for finding Him with-

out danger of error. Having once tasted the intercourse with heavenly things, do not allow thy negligence to extinguish in thy mind the divine light, that illumines and enlightens thee in darkness. Eat not thy bread in idleness; but work without relaxing in solicitude, and then thou shalt eat of the fruit of thy diligence. Strengthened by the Lord, thou wilt perform works worthy of his regard and complaisance and thou wilt run after the odor of his ointments until thou arrive at their eternal possessions. Amen.



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